

ADULT FEMALE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS: INVESTMENT, IDENTITY
AND BENEFITS

A Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

ELLs are a growing community in the United States and their learning needs are significantly different from younger learners, collegiate ELLs or Adult Basic Education students. Additionally, adult female ELLs have their own needs and motives for investing in the English language. This study explores the self-recounted experiences of three adult female English language learners' (ELLs) motivation for investing in English language learning, their identities and the benefits gained in a nonacademic learning setting in Texas.

Data for this study was gathered using a background questionnaire, individual interview, group interview and in-class observation using an instrument that looks for visible markers of investment. First, each participant's investment and identity are analyzed with regard to how the two intersect and influence each other throughout the language learning experience. Second, investment and benefits are examined and presented to demonstrate before and after pictures of the participants' experiences learning English, asking, "Have the learners gained what they sought to gain?" and "Is it worth it?"

Findings substantiate prior research on the influence that investment and identity have on each other in language learning, while also clearly demonstrating the explicit relationship between investment and benefits. The study concludes with an understanding that adult educators must recognize the individuality of each adult learner and her circumstances.

DEDICATION

For my parents, without whom I would neither have had every opportunity in the world nor care to impact for good that same world.

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NOMENCLATURE

ABE	Adult Basic Education
ELL	English Language Learner
ESL	English as a Second Language
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
US	United States

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

“...she’s a learner. She learns English with a vengeance” (Skilton-Sylvester, 2002, p. 16).

Adult English language learners (ELLs) in nonacademic settings in the United States are a diverse group in themselves (Mathews-Aydinli, 2008; Skilton-Sylvester, 1998). One can see from the literature that learners vary in gender, age, nationality, ethnicity, and background, amongst other factors. In general, this population is seen to “range in age from 16 to 90-plus, in educational background from no formal schooling to PhD holders, and in native language literacy levels from advanced to pre-literate” (Mathews-Aydinli, 2008, p. 199). This population also has a distinct set of needs that differ from young learners, adult ELLs in academic environments, and Adult Basic Education (ABE) students; these needs many times relate to family and work situations (Hubenthal, 2004; Mathews-Aydinli, 2008; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002; Skilton-Sylvester & Carlo, 1998).

In the past twenty years, educational research into learning motivation has taken a turn, looking past surface motivation to investigating language investment and how a learner’s identity and learning experience interface, and the effect that each has on the other. Since the birth of Norton Peirce’s (1995) notion of investment, studies have examined, in a variety of locations and contexts, the sociocultural nature of language learning, investment and identity. Along with this new trend in research have come more

frequent explorations into adult ELLs, nonacademic language environments, and female learners in particular; though fewer still incorporate all three factors into one study (Norton Peirce, 1995; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002). Additionally, several studies touch on benefits--self-confidence, job advancement, etc.--gained by adult ELLs, but none ask the question “Is it worth it?” Do adult (female) ELLs believe that their investment in language learning is worth it? Do the benefits outweigh the cost of time, money and effort?

This study investigates the experiences and perspectives of three adult female ELLs in a nonacademic learning environment in the United States. First, this study supports and adds to the literature on language investment and identity--how the two intersect and influence each other. Second, this study explicitly explores the intrinsic and extrinsic benefits of learning English from the perspective of adult female ELLs who have accomplished a high level of competence as demonstrated by sustained admittance into an advanced ESL class. As advanced students, these learners have acquired enough language to determine definite benefits obtained and supply a response to “Is it worth it?” It is essential for researchers and educators alike to understand motives for investment, the influence of identity and other factors related to English language learning in order to best assist these learners and develop appropriate teaching and learning methods.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Adult Education

As stated above, this study investigates adult female ELLs in an advanced, nonacademic English as a Second Language (ESL) setting in the United States. Therefore, in order to more fully understand this specific group of learners, this literature review begins by more generally demonstrating through previous literature that adult education is unique and unlike education for younger learners. Adults are situated in very different circumstances of life and are likely to be both motivated to learn by different things and encounter struggles unique to their age and experience (Hubenthal, 2004). Adults can bring with them a wealth of diverse knowledge and experience that juvenile learners may have not yet acquired (Bowl & Tobias, 2012; King, 2000) and certain, related factors--mental and physical health, motivation, self-confidence, previous education and work, the logistics of ESL classes, and work and family situations--affect adult learners in different ways than younger learners (Hubenthal, 2004; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002).

Additionally, when compared side by side with younger learners, adult students may appear static as they are physically mature, but adult development and education theories stress the “importance of avoiding narrow views of a single perspective of adult development” (Courtenay, 1994, p. 145-146). Theories of adult development and learning emphasize and hold that a main purpose of adult education is to encourage continual growth of self as adults still face many changes and challenges in their lives. Educational practice assumes a fixed adult learner at the risk of missing the potential in

“the changing nature of the internal self” (Courtenay, 1994, p. 146). Just as younger learners show visible signs of continuing maturity, adult learners are continually developing in intangible ways; an understanding that can assume all adult learners desire to and should attain personal growth from simple to more complex stages (Courtenay, 1994). There is value in these theories and models as they can be “useful in helping the practitioner understand how adults change and in knowing how to better relate to a variety of adult learners” (Courtenay, 1994, p. 151). However, this usefulness must be regarded with caution; reviews of said theories and models of adult education and development indicate that there are too many exceptions and too much ambiguity for the theories to be appropriately generalized, thus bringing to bear questions regarding the practical nature and ethical importance of these theories in real world education (Courtenay, 1994; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991; Ohliger, 1980; Tennant, 1990).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Motivation

This study looks closely at the motives for English language learning of adult female ELLs. On the surface, several general factors can be seen to motivate an adult female ELL to pursue English in the United States, such as job and career needs (Igoudin, 2008; Kim, 2011; Zacharakis, Steichen, de Sabates, & Glass, 2011); self-confidence and independence (Hubenthal, 2004; Kim, 2011; Zacharakis et al., 2011); the need to support and help family (Skilton-Sylvester, 2002; Zacharakis et al., 2011); the desire for improved socioeconomic status (Finn, 2011; Norton Peirce, 1995; Zacharakis

et al., 2011); or the need for social interaction (Igoudin, 2008; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002), amongst others. Researchers who have studied motivation have defined it with varying nuances, but for the purpose of this study, I follow that motivation generally involves “the choices people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid, and the degree of effort they will exert in that respect” (Keller, 1983, p. 389). With regard to language learning, I follow Igoudin (2008) in holding that motivation is a “continuous, interactive process between the learner and the learning environment” (p. 30); a fluctuating state in which a learner is pushed to action in order to obtain a goal (Igoudin, 2008).

One line of official, academic inquiry into motivation can be traced back to the 1930s in the origins of expectancy theory, though it was not until the 1960s when valence-instrumentality-expectancy (VIE) theory was fully fleshed out and was originally adapted as a theory of motivation for the workplace (Howard, 1989). Expectancy theory looked at an “individual’s subjective estimation of the likelihood of successfully performing a particular behavior” with the basic assumption “that anticipation of reward energizes individual behavior” (Howard, 1989, p. 200). In the 1980s, expectancy theory began to gain the attention of education as being notable in projecting adult education dropout rates. The theory was used as a framework for the study of various adult groups with a variety of results and closed the 1980s with Howard (1989) suggesting the Comprehensive Expectancy Motivation Model, putting forth several principles of adult education into one model with the understanding that “adults are more motivated to learn when involved in setting their own learning goals, when

given opportunities for relevant practice, when the ‘payoff’ of learning is immediate” (p. 208).

Another line of academic inquiry into learning motivation is found in Motivation System Theory (MST), as termed by Ford (1992). Rather than motivation being defined as a simple one dimensional construct, it is perceived as a complex structure composed of three interactive parts: emotions, goals, and personal agency beliefs (Bergin & LaFave, 1998). MST claims that goals are the results that a person is aiming to accomplish; and positive or negative emotions are the outcome of goals being either accomplished or not. Emotions, according to MST, “have biological roots, but the emotions that people feel are largely based on the meanings they attribute to events; and those meanings are constructed from their experience within a particular sociocultural context” (Bergin & LaFave, 1998, p. 327). The final component of MST, personal agency beliefs, includes capability and context beliefs. Belief in one’s capability refers to the view of whether one has the skills to complete an assignment; context beliefs “refer to whether the person believes that success is possible if one possesses sufficient skill,” that is, if the surroundings lend themselves to task completion (Bergin & LaFave, 1998, p. 327). In MST framework, that all three parts--emotions, goals, personal agency beliefs--are connected and must work together to generate motivated action; no one component can do it alone. Emphasis is placed on context and sociocultural environment in the production of motivation (Bergin & LaFave, 1998).

As this foray into the academic history of motivation demonstrates, these older models and theories of motivation have contributed greatly to the advancement of a

newer approach which looks beyond surface motivation and toward a deeper understanding of what drives a language learner, leading to the more recent notion of investment (Norton Peirce, 1995).

Theory of Investment

This study is heavily framed around Norton Peirce's concept of investment. In 1995, Norton Peirce published an article that has since changed the way many view motivation and social identity and their roles in the language learning classroom. In short, she claimed that the idea of *investment* is more accurate than *motivation* in expressing the complicated relationship between involvement in language learning and social surroundings. She believed that then-current Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory was severely lacking in understanding the impact that social inequality has on language learning. Norton Peirce (1995) then put forward her own premise on social identity, surmising that inequality plays an essential part in meetings between language learners and the rest of society. And in turn, students are not motivated to learn for one simple reason or another, but rather, choose to *invest* in language learning "with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital" (Norton Peirce, 1995, p. 17). In accordance with this understanding, her notion of investment

presupposes that when language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. Thus an investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner's own social identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space. (Norton Peirce, 1995, p. 18)

Since its introduction, Norton Peirce's (1995) theory of investment has starred in several studies as a principal basis for their frameworks (Angelil-Carter, 1997; McKay & Wong, 1996; Norton, 2001; Potowski, 2004; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002). The concept of agency provides an additional perspective as one looks at the notion of investment.

Agency

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) address the difficulty of pinpointing a definition of agency and the vague attempts in the past to do just that. In their report, the two seek to dismantle the disjointed explanations of agency and present something more comprehensive. They state, then, that human agency is

The temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments—the temporal-relational contexts of action—which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations. (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 970)

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) also stress the “reconstructive, (self-) transformative potential of human agency” (p. 1012), which relates to Blair's (2009) research of her fifth grade music class. Her study concludes that the students' agency pushed them to enhance their comprehension of music because they desired to be contributors in class and to be heard and appreciated for their own ideas. The learners' agency led them to learn and change, to transform, in their quests to understand and be understood.

Sewell (1992) writes that each individual is an agent and capable of agency. Agency, he says, entails “the capacity to transpose and extend schemas to new contexts” (Sewell, 1992, p. 18). That is, to take what one knows and has learned and be able to

apply it to new situations. Sewell (1992) even states that agency is innate in all minimally functioning humans, showing itself in the formation of intentions, desire and creativity. Agency, moreover, is demonstrated differently through various identities and persons, which one can see in the next section.

Identity

Essentially intertwined with Norton Peirce's (1995) notion of investment is the concept of a language learner's identity, mentioned briefly above. The theory of investment cannot be accurately understood without comprehending the idea of "social identity as multiple, a site of struggle, and changing over time" (Norton Peirce, 1995, p. 14). For example, in her 1995 study, Norton Peirce introduced a participant, Martina, who played many roles: worker, mother, wife, immigrant and language learner. It was through the intersection of these various identities that the woman was able to overcome her fear and assert her right to speak in order to better herself and her family's life. Her initial fear of speaking as a worker was overruled by her identity as a mother when she was able to view her much younger coworkers as similar to her children; or as Norton Peirce (1995) explains, "Martina drew on her symbolic resources as a mother to reframe the power relations between herself and her co-workers" (p. 22). Martina was not simply motivated to learn English in order to make more money; she chose to invest in language learning because her identities as a worker and mother required that she be able to communicate in order to sustain her family.

Indeed, more and more research on language and identity is coming to the understanding that identity is “dynamic, contradictory, and constantly changing across time and place” (Norton, 2008, p. 47). An individual’s multiple identities are not set in stone, but shift as life and needs alter and circumstances change. Norton (2008) describes language learning as a place where that occurs, where identities are thrashed out when new experiences are introduced or situations are altered. “Investment in the target language is also an investment in the learner’s own identity” (Norton, 2008, p. 48).

Benefits

Benefits gained- intrinsic and extrinsic- function as visible products of investment to compare with the motives for investing in language learning. There can be observable benefits to language learning such as job advancement or ease of communication; there can also be intangible benefits to learning a language such as a stronger sense of self-esteem or improved understanding of one’s new cultural surroundings.

External benefits of learning English are generally covered under the umbrella terms social and cultural capital, as previously mentioned by Norton (2008). Originally economic metaphors employed by Bourdieu (1971, 1977) in reference to conversations of social class, ‘social capital’ and ‘cultural capital’ are terms that have since been utilized by educational researchers to refer to outward products of language learning as acquired by learners. Citing Lin (2001), Alfred (2009) suggests “social capital is an

investment in social relationships with an expectation of a beneficial return to those who invest in the relationship” (p. 5). As language learners increase their understanding and use of a target language, their social capital grows as they have the ability to engage and connect with a wider variety of people and networks; these connections can in turn be used to the learner’s advantage (Alfred, 2009). Accordingly, Falk and Kilpatrick (2000) propose that social capital is the product of the meetings of political, cultural and social settings, such as a language learning environment. Additionally, cultural capital is increased, as Norton Peirce (1995) states, when language learners obtain new resources such as “language, education, and friendship...capital goods, real estate, and money” (p. 17) as a result of investment in the target language.

Intrinsic benefits come often in the forms of self-confidence and empowerment, a term that is becoming more common in education-related research. More frequently, empowerment is becoming a buzzword in education, particularly educational initiatives such as South Africa’s ‘These Numbers Have Faces’ which is an initiative whose final goal is “empowering future leaders to reduce poverty in their own communities” by providing financially for students to attend college with stipulations that students are involved in the community. King (2000) also states that “one of the predominant goals of adult education is to empower adults...” (p. 77). While rarely the primary focus of a study, empowerment of participants is addressed and discussed in several studies (Alfred, 2003; Bergin & LaFave, 1998; King, 2000; McMahon, 1997; Zacharakis et al., 2011).

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative methodology is used in this study due to the subjective, interpretive nature of the subject, personal connection with participants, and in-person methods of data collection (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). More specifically, this study utilizes a version of the Case Study, in accordance with Gall et al.'s (2007) characteristics of a case study: “(a) the in-depth study of (b) one or more instances of a phenomenon (c) in its real-life context that (d) reflects the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon” (p. 447).

Participants

Convenient and purposeful sampling was used to include participants in this study. As the title of the study suggests, the criteria for participants were being an adult, female and a language learner in a particular ESL class. The study began with a group of adults learning English in a nonacademic setting in Texas and took place in an advanced class, though just three female learners were observed and interviewed in depth. Of the four potential participants who were proficient speakers, three agreed to be part of the study. Advanced learners were utilized due to the fact that they have learned enough English to see benefits in their lives, but not so much that they are no longer motivated to invest in learning. Participants all have Spanish as a common first language, as the majority of learners in the area are Hispanic, originating from Central and South America. The majority of adult female ELLs at this location are also mothers and wives in a nuclear family.

Data Collection

Before beginning formal data collection for this study, I aided the lead teacher in the English as a Second Language (ESL) class, acting as a participant observer for almost five months.

First, I used a background questionnaire developed by Dr. Bonny Norton (previously Norton Peirce) for her dissertation questionnaire (attained directly from Dr. Norton) and had it translated to Spanish (see Appendix A). This questionnaire functioned as a form of written interview from which to springboard the following interviews. It also provided an accurate written record to reference for future reports. Names of participants were recorded in order to match the data gathered in the questionnaire and interviews with observations and provide a pattern in the case study. However, pseudonyms are used in the following chapters to report data.

Originally, the participants were to complete the written questionnaire one morning after their ESL class. However, unbeknownst to me, the ESL class had to take a pre-test for a health unit to come. I postponed the administration of the questionnaire with the understanding that the participants would be more mentally prepared at a later date, thereby putting more effort and thought into the completion of the questionnaire. In due course, the questionnaire was done by the women in a two hour window one morning and in a quiet place at an unhurried pace.

Second, I conducted casual individual and group interviews with participants in mixed English and Spanish, initiating conversation about their experiences regarding motivation, investment, identity and benefits with several pre-determined questions

selected from the above mentioned questionnaire (Dr. Norton), several other published studies (Buttaro, 2004; Igoudin, 2008; Kim, 2011), and researcher made questions as well (see Appendix B). Conversations were audio recorded to preserve the authenticity of participants' responses. Interviews lasted one to two hours. Each participant partook in two interviews, one individual and one in a group. The individual interview was employed due to its more private nature with the assumption that the participant would feel more comfortable opening up with fewer people listening. The group interview was also used as Frey and Fontana (1991) report that "evolving relations among group members can be a stimulus to elaboration and expression" (p. 183). That is, a group can act as a sounding board; when one person says something and reminds another person of a similar occurrence. Together, the individual and group interviews provided a comprehensive view of the perspectives of the participants.

The *third* method of data collection was classroom observation for a minimum of sixteen hours (eight two-hour class periods). Literature demonstrates that there is a connection between motivation to learn, and participation and engagement in class (Igoudin, 2008; Kim, 2011 citing Gardner, 1985). As Igoudin (2008) states, "...the learners' actions signifying interest and engagement in the learning process can be used to substantiate motivation" (p. 30). The observation instrument recorded specific visible markers of investment (or lack thereof): attendance, active listening, notes/writing, reading, solicited and voluntary verbal participation, group effort, and distraction (developed from Igoudin, 2008; see Appendix C).

While these markers were gathered predominantly from Igoudin (2008), the determination of their occurrence in class was a subjective call by myself. I looked for clear indicators of each marker in the women's body language, and vocal and physical participation. For example, for active listening, I looked for specific body language such as the body being turned toward the teacher, the eyes on the teacher (if not writing), and visual tracking of the teacher (versus simply staring into space). Observation tallies were not taken for the purpose of gathering exact percentages, but rather to discover a general trend of in-class participation for each participant. Were the women demonstrating a desire to invest in their language learning when in English class?

Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed and is retold in a narrative form similar to Norton Peirce's (1995) and Skilton-Sylvester's (2002) studies. Gall et al. (2007) define narratives as "the use of a communication format to organize interpretive representations and explanations of personal and social experience" (p. 519). Examination of the data focused on the intersections of investment and identity in each participant, and the connections between motives for investment (before) and benefits gained (after).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What motivates adult female ELLs in a nonacademic learning environment to invest in language learning?

2. What part do their identities play in choosing to invest in language learning?
3. How are their identities affected by learning, and how is their learning affected by their identities?
4. Do adult female ELLs in a nonacademic, advanced ESL class feel they have accomplished the goals they set out to achieve?
5. To adult female ELLs in a nonacademic learning environment, are the costs of investing in learning worth the benefits gained? Why or why not?

Chapter II examines the data with regards to the interaction between investment and identity (questions 1-3) while Chapter III analyzes the connection between investment and benefits (questions 1, 4-5). Finally, Chapter IV provides an overall conclusion and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER II

ON THE INTERACTION BETWEEN INVESTMENT AND IDENTITY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter investigates data from three adult female English language learners in a nonacademic learning environment with regards to how a learner's investment (Norton Peirce, 1995) in language learning intersects with and affects her identity, and vice versa.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory of Investment

This chapter's focus centers heavily on the idea of investment, a theory of language learning motivation come on the scene within the last 20 years. The theory of investment was introduced in 1995 by Bonny Norton Peirce. The theory states that "investment rather than motivation more accurately signals the socially and historically constructed relationship of the women [or students] to the target language and their sometimes ambivalent desire to learn and practice it" (Norton Peirce, 1995, p. 17). The concept of investment attempts to better understand and explain the language learner and her situation by taking into account the give and take of real life situations rather than a one-dimensional view of which factors motivate a student to learn.

Norton Peirce's (1995) theory of investment is developed from the concepts of scholars such as Weedon (1987), Gardner and Lambert (1972), Bourdieu (1977), and

Ogbu (1978). Weedon's (1987) writing on social identity follows in the vein of feminist poststructuralism, but emphasizes the integral part language plays in the connection between the collective and the individual. Weedon (1987) is additionally recognized for her use of the theory of subjectivity, which she defines as "the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world" (p. 32). Norton Peirce (1995) borrows heavily from Weedon's (1987) qualities of subjectivity to inform her own research: "the multiple nature of the subject; subjectivity as a site of struggle; and subjectivity as changing over time" (Norton Peirce, 1995, p. 15). That is, (1) the poststructuralist idea that a person is dynamic and composed of multiple parts/identities; (2) the concept that one's identity is a place of struggle due to human agency; and (3) the notion that identities are in a constant state of flux as power relations shift and occur around a person.

Norton Peirce (1995) references also Gardner and Lambert's (1972; see also Gardner, 1985) work on integrative and instrumental motivation in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), which say that a student wishes to learn a language for utilitarian reasons or to assimilate successfully into a new society. Norton Peirce (1995) states that such views on motivation are shallow in conception because they do not demonstrate the intricate relationship between language learning, power and identity. She uses this as a springboard to introduce investment as more precise, encompassing the give and take of language learning.

Bourdieu's (1977) unconscious contribution to Norton Peirce's (1995) theory of investment comes in the form of economic metaphors such as 'cultural capital,' a now common understanding in the field of SLA (related to 'social capital' - Alfred, 2009b; Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000; Lin, 2001- further discussed in Chapter III). Norton Peirce (1995) presents the perspective "that if learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital" (p. 17). In short, learners expect to give time and effort and take away an improved life, equivalent in quality to the quality of effort put into learning (Ogbu, 1978). I write further on the benefits and products of language learning in Chapter III.

Agency

Norton Peirce (1995) briefly taps into the idea of conscious and unconscious investment in language learning in explicit terms, while other researchers and scholars broach the concept of 'agency' in language learning more fully; agency being understood as "the capacity, condition, or state of acting or of exerting power" (Agency). In SLA research and writings prior to the mid-nineties, the discussion on learner agency is very insubstantial (McKay & Wong, 1996). In 1996, McKay and Wong published a study centered on Norton Peirce's (1995) concept of investment, but delve deeper and more openly into the human agency of their junior high school participants and their teachers. McKay and Wong (1996) analyze in detail the opportunities of the participants and their consequent choices as they learn English.

McKay and Wong's (1996) conclusions refer much to their young learners' agency with regards to investment in language learning. They also speak more directly than Norton Peirce (1995) of the conscious and unconscious agency of the students; they write, "As subjects with agency and a need to exercise it, the learners, while positioned in power relations and subject to the influence of discourses, also resist positioning, attempt repositioning, and deploy discourses and counterdiscourses" (McKay & Wong, 1996, p. 603). McKay and Wong (1996) concur with Norton Peirce's (1995) writings on investment and identity but acknowledge and present a distinction between younger and older learners. Their research offers a view of their young participants as more concerned with strengthening their identities and personal power, or agency, whereas Norton Peirce's (1995) adult participants appear to focus more on a return on their investment in language learning. However, while adults may think more on their investment than young learners, let us not discount the part that their identities play in learning.

Identity

Understandings of identity as applied to this study are also drawn from Norton's (collaborative) works (1995, 2001, 2008), Skilton-Sylvester (2002), and Alfred (2002, 2003, 2009a, 2009b, 2010). As touched on above, understandings of what social identity is in the field of SLA have come primarily from poststructuralism's views on the connections between the individual and the group (Weedon, 1987). Moreover, "poststructuralism depicts the individual (i.e., the subject) as diverse, contradictory,

dynamic, and changing over historical time and social space” (McKinney & Norton, 2008, p. 194). An individual’s multiple identities are not set in stone, but shift as life and needs alter and circumstances change. Norton (2008) describes language learning as a place where that occurs, where identities are constantly thrashed out when new experiences are introduced or situations are altered.

For example, in her 2002 article, Skilton-Sylvester presents her research on Cambodian women’s involvement in ESL classes and their shifting identities and the connection with language learning investment. She builds her research on Norton Peirce’s (1995) concept of investment in language learning as she follows four women through their then-current lives. Skilton-Sylvester (2002) shows clearly how identity and investment intersect; how even one particular identity can both positively and negatively affect investment in learning. One of her participants, Ming, initially came to ESL class as the designated English learner of her family. Ming’s identity as a wife was a large push behind her investment in learning as it was her job in the family to study English before joining her husband’s business. However, Skilton-Sylvester’s (2002) data also reveals that Ming’s wife identity had much to do with her leaving the ESL class, or no longer investing. It would seem that her husband discovered that the English teacher was a young, single Cambodian man and promptly pulled Ming out of class. In this way, one identity (wife) had both a positive and negative effect on language investment.

Norton Peirce (1995) and Skilton-Sylvester (2002) have set the stage for future research through their investigations into adults and female learners in particular, and the learners’ identities and investment in a nonacademic ESL context. Many other scholars

look at adult education (such as ABE) *or* English language learners in general *or* collegiate ESL *or* English as a Foreign Language (EFL), but they do not combine the factors adult, female and ESL. Norton Peirce (1995) and Skilton-Sylvester (2002) look to this specific population and this study aids in filling in the blanks of this distinct populace. There is yet much to learn about the similarities and differences within the population of adult females in a nonacademic ESL setting.

METHODOLOGY

Norton Peirce's (1995) theory makes the effort to encompass a whole view of investment in language learning, including the learner's personal history and current circumstances, etc. While this allows for a better understanding of the language learner, it also makes data collection a much more involved process. Therefore, a qualitative methodology was utilized in this study due to the subjective, interpretive nature of the research topic, personal connection with the participants, and in-person methods of data collection (Gall, et al., 2007). In particular, this study employed a form of the Case Study, in following with Gall et al.'s (2007) features of a case study: "(a) the in-depth study of (b) one or more instances of a phenomenon (c) in its real-life context that (d) reflects the perspectives of the participants involved in the phenomenon" (p. 447).

Participants

This study involved three participants who were selected through convenient and purposeful sampling from a nonacademic, advanced ESL class. All are women and all

are from Mexico, sharing Spanish as a first language. As covered in Chapter I, this study intended to investigate women in particular, however, any first language would have sufficed; it just happened that the whole class had Spanish as a first language, which is not surprising considering the location. In addition to a native language, the participants also share a similar period of life; that is, their ages range from mid-thirties to mid-forties, and each is part of a nuclear family in which she is a wife and mother.

Data Collection

Data was collected using several methods: a written questionnaire, individual interview, group interview and observation. The questionnaire was developed by Dr. Bonny Norton for her dissertation and used in this study with her knowledge; it was translated into Spanish for the participants (see Appendix A). I also conducted an informal group interview with all three participants and informal individual interviews with each of them in mixed Spanish and English. A set of guiding questions for each interview was put together from several scholars in the field (Buttaro, 2004; Igoudin, 2008; Kim, 2011; Norton Peirce, 1995; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002) and this researcher (see Appendix B). The final method of data collection was observation of the participants in the class setting. The observation instrument recorded specific visible markers of investment (or lack thereof): attendance, active listening, notes/writing, reading, solicited and voluntary verbal participation, group effort, and distraction (developed from Igoudin, 2008; see Appendix C).

Data Analysis

Collected data was then analyzed and reviewed in light of research questions 1-3, which seek to further uncover the interaction between investment in language learning and the learners' identities. As introduced in Chapter I, questions 1-3 are as follows:

1. What motivates adult female ELLs in a nonacademic learning environment to invest in language learning?
2. What part do their identities play in choosing to invest in language learning?
3. How are their identities affected by learning, and how is their learning affected by their identities?

Having analyzed the data, the participants' stories are retold in a narrative form similar to Norton Peirce's (1995) and Skilton-Sylvester's (2002) studies. Gall et al. (2007) define narratives as "the use of a communication format to organize interpretive representations and explanations of personal and social experience" (p. 519).

Additionally, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) state that

Qualitative research is multimethod in its focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 2)

In other words, context is extremely important in qualitative research; in fact it is one of the defining differences between qualitative and quantitative. Therefore, allow me to set the scene for this research project. The city in which the ESL class takes place and the participants live is a small Texas city of a little over 13,000 and its main industry is in oil. Consequently, it draws a high immigrant population, the majority of whom are from

Mexico; the immigrant population is relatively stable in terms of people coming and staying.

The ESL course is provided by a non-profit group from a larger nearby city; it is free and open to all people, though they must be registered at the beginning of each academic semester (in keeping with the local grade school schedule). The students must only purchase the course text and workbook. Historically, this particular ESL class has been wholly female, however, one man recently joined. His presence has very subtly changed the tone and conversation within the class; that is, there is minutely less talk of husbands and gender differences.

ANALYSIS

The three female participants in this study were selected due to their language proficiency in the advanced, nonacademic ESL class. Four were approached and three agreed to participate. The three women have similar identities and at times similar experiences investing in language learning. As stated above, each is a wife and mother in a nuclear family; however, though the identity title is the same, each woman's identity and the way it is acted out is different. One woman's mother identity is not identical to another woman's mother identity, and the same for any other identity title. Likewise, each participant's (potential, past or present) worker identity is her own, no two have the exact same experiences. This analysis presents the reader with an understanding of each woman's unique experience investing in language learning (the give and take) and her identities and how the two concepts intersect, connect and influence each other.

Gloria: The Newlywed

Gloria is in her mid-forties and has been married for about eighteen months to an American national of Mexican heritage. She is originally from Mexico and traveled to Canada and California before coming to Texas where she met her husband. In Mexico, she began working at a bank at the age of seventeen and attending university where she studied business administration. However, after her father broke his back, she had to leave university to help her family by making money and watching after her siblings. At that time, her identity as a daughter pulled her from further education.

Several years later, Gloria traveled to Canada with her sister and a friend, later living with three more women, making a total of six in one apartment. What began as just a vacation turned into six months of working, seeing the sights in Canada and learning English. Because the women remained for an extended period of time, they had to work to support themselves, and so Gloria (and the others) also attended English classes for two months in Canada. Her identities as a sister, friend and I add adventurer, took Gloria to Canada and aided in the beginning of her investment in English. She needed money to remain in Canada, and so had to work, which pushed her to start learning English. That 'push' was part of the 'give' in the 'give and take' of investment. Gloria has repeatedly chosen to give time and effort to the process of language acquisition in order to reap the benefits, demonstrating an awareness of her own agency and an understanding of what her investment will secure. The Cambridge dictionary, indeed, defines "investment" as just that: "the act of putting money or effort into something to make a profit or achieve a result" (Investment).

Gloria has family in several cities in the United States, including a large city in Texas where she worked a few years ago in her cousin's truck store. However, despite being in a nation where English is the official language, in that place at that time, she had no need to continue investing in language learning. The majority of her interactions were in Spanish, her native language, and so her identity as a worker did not require that she invest in English. One sees here an occurrence where one identity- worker- both positively and negatively affected language investment (Skilton-Sylvester, 2002). In Canada, Gloria's position as a worker pushed her to learn, while her worker identity in a large Texas city did not push her to invest in language.

Approximately five years ago when Gloria was working in the truck store, she first encountered the man she would marry. While of Mexican heritage, he speaks predominantly English; though, in the beginning he and Gloria would communicate in both English and Spanish. After about four years down Relationship Road, Gloria and her husband were married, and she became a wife, mom and grandma in an English speaking family. These new identities have encouraged and pushed her to invest in language learning more than any identity previously. She repeatedly stated in our interviews, "...just English in my house" (Gloria, personal communication, April 4, 2013).

Not only have her recently acquired family identities motivated her investment, but her investment in English has influenced her as a wife, mom and grandma. Gloria's relationships with other family members have altered, almost wholly for the better, as she can now hold a conversation with her husband and his two grown children in

English. Interestingly, Gloria's identity as a mom is different from the other participants in this study because the two grown children have not had a mother figure since they were very young. "...them talk to me like mom," she said, "...and I'm can sit for two or three hours and speak and speak and speak and listen and try understand, try hard, like mom" (Gloria, personal communication, April 4, 2013).

Moreover, Gloria's relationship with her husband has improved as well as she has continued to invest in learning. In the last few months he has started speaking only English with her, despite his knowledge of her native Spanish. "...sometimes he real mad with me because I don't understand...Now, he's different because I speak more English so is easier for me, but before he so angry" (Gloria, personal communication, April 4, 2013). Her identity as a wife is not the exact same as it was when the two married, just around eighteen months ago. How she views herself as a wife and how others view her as a wife, her identity, is different than it was.

Gloria also spoke of how her interactions with her husbands' friends have altered due to her continued language learning. She described the first time she met her husband's best friend: "Is crazy. The first time I went the, my husband best friend and his wife, too, we went to the bar. So I'm just sit, stupid look because I don't understand" (Gloria, personal communication, April 4, 2013). Her identity as a wife was portrayed as simply a silent woman, she could not speak for herself. Many months later, having invested in English, she said, "Now, it's four. No three and Gloria" (Gloria, personal communication, April 4, 2013). In situations with her husband, she is now a wife who can speak up and participate independently. At a party: "Before, no, I need [him to] stay

with me. I feel so bad because I don't understand nothing. Now, I'm okay" (Gloria, personal communication, April 4, 2013).

Her identity as a grandma has also pushed Gloria to invest heavily in learning English. The grandchildren are four and five years old boys and a 10 months old girl, and their primary language is English. In our group interview, Gloria said,

...sometimes scared because crazy boys, so I need explain exactly you can do nothing for this and for this and this. I need because the boys jump and [I say] 'Don't jump in the bed' and [they say] 'Why?' So I need explain but is too hard for me. (Gloria, personal communication, March 7, 2013)

She believes it is very important that she be able to communicate fully with her grandchildren as she cares for them so often. Furthermore, investing and learning English has the potential to alter Gloria even more as a grandma; she can explain more easily how to behave and why not to act a certain way as the children grow older and inevitably more curious.

Many times Gloria also spoke of her wish to work in a bank as she had in Mexico. She said, "...wanna study English but really 100% I can read, I can speak perfect English...I want really English because I wanna work in a bank" (Gloria, personal communication, April 4, 2013). Her identity as a (future) worker in the United States hinges on her investment. She cannot be employed in a bank without being able to fully participate with the English language; she *must* invest to secure the working position she desires.

Gloria has throughout her continued investment in English, demonstrated an awareness and understanding of her own agency, and her position in social interactions. While she may or may not know the term 'agency,' this English language learner has

appeared to understand her own power in society and used it to make change for herself; for example, Gloria has proven herself able to see a problem in her home and solve it. Her husband works as a truck driver and is gone for days at a time and during one of his extended work periods a few months ago, the cable television stopped working at Gloria's house. Instead of waiting for her fluent English-speaking husband or children to fix it, Gloria called the cable company and used her English to speak with someone to have the cable fixed. Of this occurrence, she said, "When you have to do, you do it" (Gloria, personal communication, April 4, 2013).

My observations of Gloria's behavior in the ESL class corroborate her spoken desire to learn and invest in the English language. She was often the most vocal, whether solicited or not, and her speech, while not perfect, was fluent and quick, demonstrating confidence. She rarely paused to search for a word. When asked to work in groups, Gloria could often be seen leading the group to complete the task, and I point out that she has a strong personality, which could contribute to this. That is, her apparent leadership during group work cannot solely be attributed to her desire to invest in English. Though she was absent from class several times during my formal observation period, I will remind the reader that Gloria is a primary caretaker for her three grandchildren while the rest of the family works during the day, and that causes her to miss class at times. Here, her identity as a grandma both encourages investment and acts as a barrier toward it.

Teresa: Mother of Three

Teresa is originally from Mexico. She grew up in a very small town where education stopped at the ninth grade. After she completed the ninth grade, she lived in another, larger city with a family for a few months; there she worked and continued with more schooling. However, Teresa soon returned home because she missed her family greatly. When she was 17, she moved again to another, bigger city where her sister resided, and again she quickly returned home. At 18, Teresa's recently acquired boyfriend went to the United States (US) and worked for about a year, all the while sending her letters and calling her when he could. He returned, they married at the age of 19 and she left her home to follow her new husband to the US where he had acquired a job because he could not find work in Mexico.

Teresa has now been living in the United States for 15 years and is in her mid-thirties. In her family, she is a wife and mother to three boys in grade school. Teresa's identity as a wife has absolutely motivated her investment in language learning. Her husband speaks just a little English and heartily encourages her investment in English, saying it's better for her to learn. When they were newly arrived in the United States, her husband had to do much of the footwork for the household because Teresa could not drive or speak any English at all. Of that time, she said,

...everyday, my husband go to the store to buy groceries, pay the bills, and for me, was stress because my children was babies, much more in my home, and my husband sometimes come tired and he angry with me because I no drive and no speak English. (Teresa, personal communication, March 7, 2013)

However, now, having put in much time and effort, Teresa speaks more English than her husband, has learned to drive and is the one to pay the bills, buy the groceries, talk with

their children's teachers and doctors, and fill out forms, etcetera. She also helped her husband study for his driver's license test and aids him in periodically filling out insurance renewal forms for his work. One can see how Teresa's position or identity as a wife has been a large part of the push for her to invest in learning English. And in turn, learning more of the language has influenced how she acts as a wife, and what she does in and for her household.

Without doubt, Teresa's identity as a mother has influenced her investment in English. All three of her children are in grade school and she helps them with their homework, though sometimes she has to ask them what certain words are because they speak English more fluently than she does. Teresa's children even tell her that they want her to learn English so she can talk to other mothers at parties and such events. Her neighbors are English speakers and she spoke of when she has had parties at her house and her children have had to translate for her: "...only I can my son for translation but for me, my face is red and...I need speak English, yes" (Teresa, personal communication, March 7, 2013). Teresa displays embarrassment about needing her sons to translate; her identity as a mother makes up a large part of her desire to pursue and invest in English. Conversely, her continued acquisition of English has altered how she functions as a mother, and how she can help her children. She can assist her boys with their homework more than she could before, and she is better able to understand the doctor when she has to take her children. As a mother who is investing in English, she is more capable of assisting and supporting her family.

One can already see that Teresa has multiple identities in her life; another identity is that of immigrant. She has come from Mexico to live in the United States permanently and so she has had to learn to speak and interact with English speaking Americans in order to function and survive. Teresa's immigrant identity has strongly encouraged her to invest in the English language; this particular identity, in fact, provided a key turning point in her journey to learn English.

Almost five years after arriving in the United States, Teresa and her husband had an encounter with the police that scared her. The two were living in a mobile home and a couple of her husbands' cousins were moving in with them. In order to more easily move their things into the home, the cousins opened a window and backed their truck up to it to unload. A police officer was driving by and stopped, thinking the cousins were actually robbing the home. The officer asked Teresa what was happening in English, but she couldn't answer. With minimal Spanish, the officer asked her how long she had been in the US and this is how she tells the rest of the story:

...he [the officer] tell me, 'And you have five years here and you no speak English?' But with...no nice police with the word. He look angry, he look, I don't know, maybe he don't like Mexican. I don't know but he don't look nice with the word. And he tell me, 'Oh my god, five years and you no speak English?' And [I] say, 'Ya, sorry...' ...My first experience when me, I'm very very sad and angry. Angry, too, me. But for turn place for me. I need speak English because is true. Is true. I need speak English. (Teresa, personal communication, April 9, 2013)

Her identity as an immigrant has played a crucial role in pushing Teresa to invest in the English language. And as she has gained proficiency in English, she has been able to interact more successfully with the general American populace, for example to return clothing items to the store when need be.

Since first arriving in the US, Teresa has held a variety of jobs. Though she does not work currently so that she can be home with her children, she intends to return to work when her boys are older. Her self-recounted experiences display her past and future worker identities as very influential in her investment in language. A couple of her first jobs allowed her to use Spanish and so she did not need to learn English. However, two of her other previous jobs in particular pushed her to invest time and effort into studying English. One job was in a hotel where she cleaned the rooms and had the misfortune to misunderstand some of the customers. For example, a customer might have asked her to just vacuum or just put in clean towels and she cleaned the whole room instead. Her worker identity there helped her to realize that she needed to learn English, to invest the time and effort to be more successful in a job sphere that is predominantly English speaking.

The other job that was very influential in Teresa's language investment was a catering business that cooked for oil field companies and for occasions such as weddings. She formed a strong rapport with the English speaking owners who themselves invested time and money into Teresa to help her learn the language. Her identity as a worker there pressured her to invest in learning English and she was fortunate enough to have a boss willing to teach her on the job. There was a time at this job when Teresa worked during a wedding and she was to ask the guests coming through the food line if they would like chicken. However, she said 'kitchen' instead of 'chicken' about half the time and was embarrassed when her employer told her later. Her self-recounted experiences tell this story: the effort she put into learning, her investment,

helped Teresa to become a better and more efficient worker. At a later time when serving in a food line, she successfully asked the customers if they would like grilled or fried chicken--she reported feeling good inside.

I also introduce what I call Teresa's volunteer spirit and identity. She is regularly involved in volunteer activities and shows a great desire to help people wherever she can, be it raising money for her church or cleaning a sick person's house. This desire and identity has been a source of significant encouragement in her journey to learn English. For example, to help her church raise money to construct a new building, Teresa leads a group of women who cook and sell breakfast to the church populace at regular intervals. In the past she has had difficulty communicating with the American members to set up. In her words, "...before I can't explain I need open the door because I need towels, I need plates, everything, spoon, and but now I can explain and understand" (Teresa, personal communication, April 9, 2013).

Furthermore, Teresa spoke more than once of her wish to speak more with and help the English-speaking members of her church when they have needs. When asked for whom she is studying English, part of her response was this: "...for can help the other person. Because sometime I come to church and we have American friend and sometimes they need help in their house, they sick or something, and I want to speak English for ask 'Do you need help? Clean your house or stay with you?' "(Teresa, personal communication, March 7, 2013). Her volunteer identity so desires to assist where she can and that very much encourages Teresa's investment in the English language.

My observations of Teresa's involvement in the ESL class confirm her spoken desire to invest in the English language. For the most part, her body language indicated that her attention was on the teacher or on the text accordingly. Every once in a while, her attention appeared to wander and she would stare into space. And while she paused somewhat frequently in her speech and spoke slowly to find her words in English, Teresa did not hesitate to ask questions. When she needed or wanted an answer, she sought it, unembarrassed to ask in the English class.

Silvia: Translating Wife

Like Gloria and Teresa, Silvia is also originally from Mexico. She arrived in the United States just over eleven years ago and married her current husband. Silvia is currently in her mid-thirties and her primary roles in life now are being a wife and mother to two children in grade school. Her own mother remains in Mexico, but all her brothers and sisters reside in the United States. At least one is married to an English speaking American, but the majority of her siblings and in-laws speak Spanish on a daily basis.

Initially, one might think that because Silvia's nuclear and extended family speak Spanish, her investment in English might have little impact on her family relationships. But her investment in English, according to her self-described experiences, has certainly impacted her identities as a wife and mother. Silvia is the primary adult English speaker in her family and is therefore responsible for household and familial duties that involve the English language. When asked how her English impacts her family, she stated, "...is

more easy because we understand everything, the school, the hospital, the doctor or everywhere” (Silvia, personal communication, April 2, 2013).

Silvia’s investment in English has also more directly influenced her husband, and how she functions as a wife. In her own words,

...when he came for my home and he bring the papers for the...insurance or for his work, and I help him. Or sometimes when we work and he need review the papers...he [writes] what he do in this day, he clean the truck or he...write, yeah everyday...ok, for example, see, he work clean the holes? He make the holes...oil and he needs and I help him...write. Or when he go to the, because he drive a truck for work and need change the oil, and I help him... (Silvia, personal communication, April 2, 2013)

That is, Silvia helps her husband with paperwork for his job. He has to record what he does at work and periodically fill out renewal insurance forms and her assistance makes that part of his work undeniably easier. Her investment in English has changed how she operates as a wife, which has conversely encouraged her to continue learning the language. She stated, “...in the past I don’t speak English or nothing, but now I feel good, too, with help my husband” (Silvia, personal communication, April 2, 2013).

With two children in English speaking grade school, Silvia’s investment in English has certainly influenced her identity as a mother. It has enabled her to interact with her children in a way she couldn’t have without English understanding. Silvia assists her two kids with many subjects--math, science--but she is particularly pleased to be able to help them with spelling homework. Of this, she said,

...I feel good when I or ‘Mom, can you help me?’ and say ‘Oh thank you, mom.’ Or when everyday we study for the spelling words in the morning and I feel happy when she came for other Friday, no Thursday it happened... ‘100, mom!’ And I feel good because [my husband] say, ‘Yes, because you help her.’ (Silvia, personal communication, April 2, 2013)

And in turn, her identity as a mother has encouraged Silvia to continue investing in the English language. She wants to be strong and be able to understand and use English in order to be there for her children. “Because I think my children they grow up and they need my help, too” (Silvia, personal communication, March 7, 2013). Additionally, Silvia’s English investment helps her children as she is able to communicate with their doctors and teachers in conferences and on other occasions to make sure they are doing well in health and school.

I also discuss Silvia’s identity as a consumer because she shops a great deal and in her ESL class, the teacher would joke about Silvia needing to be a professional shopper. “If you need something, Silvia can find it,” she would say. Certainly, Gloria and Teresa also shopped out of necessity and desire, but it would seem not nearly as often as Silvia. And at the time of this study’s data collection, Silvia was remodeling a bathroom in her house and so was frequently shopping for related items. When we talked, she had recently and successfully purchased a bathroom sink from a hardware store using English.

Silvia’s son’s favorite thing to eat is pizza, which makes her following declaration significant: “For example, I can buy a pizza inside the restaurant. Three years ago or five years ago, I can’t speak English and for me...is an advantage” (Silvia, personal communication, March 7, 2013). Her investment in English has equipped her to become a greater and more efficient consumer. As the principal English-speaking adult in her nuclear family, Silvia is the one who shops for groceries and clothes for her family. In her words, “Now I can take a little conversation with the person but before

nothing. Is quiet. I can buy, I can go to the store myself and I can buy something. The cashier asks me something. I understand. I answer the question. And that's I feel. I feel better, I feel good" (Silvia, personal communication, March 7, 2013).

One can see from her experiences how investing in English has aided Silvia greatly as a consumer and how Silvia's need and desire to shop as a consumer encourage her to persevere in her language investment. Though she has demonstrated success thus far, Silvia still spoke of occasions where she cannot understand store employees and her wish to learn more and more English. Her identity as a consumer is pushing her to invest even now.

Silvia currently does not work, but stays home with her children and takes care of her household and her family's English speaking related needs. However, she has expressed an interest in working when she can speak and understand more English than she does now. Silvia has not worked before. Here, one sees an interface between investment and identity that is different from the other participants' same intersection between investment and a worker identity. As mentioned above, one person's identity is not identical to another person's identity of the same title. Silvia is investing in English with a vague notion as to how it can affect her opportunities as a worker, but without a real emphasis on what she needs to learn or a plan as to when she will begin actively searching for employment. When asked how much more English she wants to learn before looking for employment, she said, "Everything. Not everything, but...basic" (Silvia, personal communication, April 2, 2013). She has been in her ESL class for approximately seven years and stated her desire to learn even more before she tries to

work. Her words and lack of experience demonstrate a (potential) worker identity that is *not* having much influence on her investment in English. One sees that not all identity/investment intersections are hugely productive or create radical change.

When asked what she wanted to accomplish when she first arrived in her ESL class, Silvia replied thus, “Speak English...not very good because, but I’m trying but now I feel good because I go my own everywhere, and I buy for my own self” (Silvia, personal communication, April 2, 2013). Her agency, her personal power, is displayed in her everyday life, in every decision she makes to face her fear and embarrassment of speaking. In her own words, “...is scary speak English but I need...speak English because is necessary. Sometimes I think first I can’t speak but I need. Maybe they don’t understand me, but I try. Because everywhere I go they speak English” (Silvia, personal communication, April 2, 2013). For many years she has attended the ESL class, even if only to learn one new word in a class period. And, each day she interacts with the English-speaking community to help take care of her family. Silvia spoke more often than the other two participants about her fear of speaking and when she has been embarrassed, but one can see her personal agency- in strength, fortitude, power- showing through that unease in her actions.

Interesting to note and an indication of Silvia’s commitment to her investment in English is the fact that she’s been attending her ESL class for about seven years. As she said, “...I had opportunity for learn English here and is because I want. I come every year because I have opportunity” (Silvia, personal communication, April 2, 2013). She repeatedly spoke of taking advantage of the free ESL classes while she had time and was

not working. In class, Silvia proved herself to be inquisitive and to have an excellent ear based on the questions she asked often about such and such words that sound similar in English; for example, 'bear' and 'bare.' Like Teresa, Silvia had no qualms about asking questions and seeking answers in the English class. She spoke softly but confidently, thinking about her words but not hesitating to use them.

DISCUSSION

One can see from these accounts that Gloria, Teresa and Silvia have had and continue to have multiple identities in their lives and none are fixed, but are constantly shifting to accommodate new circumstances, substantiating prior research on identity in language learning (Norton Peirce, 1995; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002; Weedon, 1987). Each woman's investment in the English language is consistently and constantly intertwined with her identities, and each contributes to changes in the other. It is impossible to talk about language investment without including social identities and vice versa.

As suspected, each woman's identities as a wife and mother in a nuclear family had great impact on her investment, but in different ways. Teresa and Silvia, with their native Spanish speaking families, followed pretty consistently with previously established research and generalities about immigrant women learning English in the United States: they are learning to help and support their families (Skilton-Sylvester, 2002; Zacharakis et al., 2011). However, Gloria's wife and mother identities were unique in this project as she married into an English speaking family and had to learn the language in order to function successfully in her own home.

Unexpectedly, a different identity displayed itself in each woman that was distinctly more pronounced than in the other two participants. Teresa demonstrated through her experiences what I deemed her volunteer identity; Silvia her consumer identity; and Gloria her grandma identity. These individual identities played a large part for each woman in encouraging her continued investment in English. While similar demographically, the participants of this study established well the uniqueness of each learner and how her identity and investment in language learning interact.

The women's differentiating and distinct identities serve to highlight the importance of understanding one's students, particularly the adult learners who are *not* one-dimensional learners simply because they are physically and emotionally matured (Courtenay, 1994). Educators can better teach and prepare their adult language students for new circumstances when they acknowledge, accept and appreciate the diversity within each learner, utilizing that understanding to instruct the learner where it will be most effective, be it toward career advancement or how to speak to cashiers at the grocery store.

Language Level: Perceived Twice

Gloria, Teresa and Silvia each gave a self-assessment of her language level in the written background questionnaire. It was very interesting to note how they perceived their language abilities and how I perceived their language level as I spoke with and observed them. There were both differences and similarities between their accounts and mine.

At the time of data collection, Gloria believed herself to be a “much worse” speaker than native English speakers and to be a “better” speaker than other ELLs. Despite her “much worse” proclamation, she continued to invest in learning with the desire to change her assessment. And, compared to when she began attending the ESL class two semesters previously, Gloria wrote that she understands much more English now due to investing in language through the class. Her written self-assessment of her language ability is a bit out of tune with my assessment of her language level. In my interviews with and observations of her, I agree that she is a better speaker than other ELLs, however, she is *not* “much worse” than a native English speaker. Gloria is certainly not as proficient, but she is very capable of holding a conversation with someone who speaks English as a first language. I believe that Gloria has a higher level of English proficiency than she thinks she has and it should be noted that despite her not entirely positive language self-assessment, Gloria has not quit investing. If anything, her believed language deficiencies have only fueled her to continue investing in English.

On her background questionnaire, Teresa wrote that she speaks English “a little worse” than both native English speakers and other ELLs. From her time investing in the ESL class, Teresa also wrote that she has learned “some” or “a little” English in the four basic areas of reading, writing, listening and speaking. According to her, it is still difficult to understand English in the majority of her interactions. Having spent ample time talking with and observing Teresa, I agree that she does not speak as well as a native English speaker, but disagree with her when I say that she speaks as well as other ELLs. I believe her somewhat hesitant demeanor may cause her to self-assess at a lower

language level than she actually is. Let it also be noted that despite her self-assessment of having learned little and speaking worse than other ELLs, Teresa continues to invest in English, encouraged, I believe, by the needs of her various identities.

Silvia wrote that she speaks English “a little worse” than both native English speakers and ELLs, and the majority of her interactions are “hard” or “very hard” to have in English. Silvia gave the impression that she believes herself to not be a very good speaker of English, as also evidenced by her statement that she wants to learn “more English” before getting a job, though she has been attending this ESL class for seven years. My assessment of Silvia’s language level based on my time speaking with her and observing her in class is a bit higher than she rates herself. While she is “a little worse” than a native English speaker, she is as proficient a speaker as many other ELLs in her area. Of her classmates, she is one of the most advanced English users. Despite Silvia’s somewhat negative impression of her language abilities, she continues to invest in learning English. It is my belief that the needs of her multiple identities push her to learn and invest time and effort.

Implications

The findings and conclusions of this study suggest several things for the adult English language learning classroom. Primarily, the implications of this study point toward educator understanding of students. In particular, teachers of adult female ELLs must acknowledge, accept and appreciate the individuality of each student. The needs and motives behind investing in learning are unique to each learner, despite, perhaps, the

similarity of demographics. Making a point to understand the circumstances surrounding each student allows an instructor to better teach and prepare her adult female ELLs for life in a new language.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was time. Increased interview time or number of interviews could have uncovered further conclusions about the participants' self-recounted experiences. Also, home visits could have broadened the information revealed about the women's investment in English.

This study was also limited by virtue of its qualitative nature. Norton (2008) writes about "the complexities of qualitative research" (p. 51) and indeed qualitative research requires a certain amount of subjectivity and interpretation of the data. However, I tried to avoid positionality bias (Takacs, 2003) by providing quotes directly from the women. In this way, while I provide my view of the women's self-recounted experience, the reader still has the opportunity to read straight from the source.

Future Research

There are several, logical paths for future research stemming from this study. The *first* is that an identical study be conducted with different women in the same area to substantiate the conclusions of this study. The *second* suggestion is that another identical study be conducted but with a maximum variation sample instead of a homogeneous sample. A *third* study recommendation is to look at investment and identity in English

language learning with a focus on the differences between female and male learners. The *final* suggestion for a study is to, again, investigate investment and identity in English language learning, comparing the experiences of learners from different English speaking nations such as the United States, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom.

CHAPTER III

ON THE CONNECTION BETWEEN INVESTMENT AND BENEFITS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores data from three adult female English language learners in a nonacademic learning environment with regards to how investment (Norton Peirce, 1995) in language learning is connected to the benefits the learner gains from language learning. Let it be noted that as stated in the previous chapter, it is nigh impossible to separate identity from investment in the language learning discussion. That being said, while it is not a focus in this chapter, identity most certainly shows up.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theory of Investment

The concept of investment in language learning plays a central role in this chapter as well. The concept was introduced in 1995 by Bonny Norton Peirce (now Norton) as a more comprehensive view to investigate and analyze why/how a language learner commits to the difficult task of acquiring a new language. She argues that previous Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theorists had not “developed a comprehensive theory of social identity that integrates the language learner and the language learning context” (Norton Peirce, 1995, p. 12). This argument led her to propose the notion of investment, which declares that language learning and acquisition is a socially complex experience where the learner must consciously and unconsciously

negotiate society's power relations. These negotiations lead a learner to find a time and place in which to assert her right to speak; in other words, "the notion of investment...attempts to capture the relationship of the language learner to the changing social world" (Norton Peirce, 1995, p. 17).

Norton Peirce (1995) grew her theory of investment from the thoughts and writings of other scholars such as Weedon (1987), Gardner and Lambert (1972), Bourdieu (1977), and Ogbu (1978). Much was drawn from poststructuralist Weedon's (1987) work, which "is distinguished from that of other postmodern theorists in the rigorous and comprehensive way in which her work links individual experience and social power in a theory of subjectivity" (p. 32). Neither does Weedon (1987) ignore the pivotal role that language plays in the interactions between an individual and society. For the idea of investment, Norton Peirce (1995) adopts three primary attributes of Weedon's (1987) writings on subjectivity; they are: "the multiple nature of the subject; subjectivity as a site of struggle; and subjectivity as changing over time" (Norton Peirce, 1995, p. 15). In essence, the understandings that (1) a person does not have a single identity, but has multiple identities in life; (2) change in a person's identity may not come easily; and (3) an identity is neither permanent nor fixed, it *will* change.

Gardner and Lambert's (1972; see also Gardner, 1985) work on SLA motivation is also influential in the growth of Norton Peirce's (1995) concept of investment. She nods to their notions of integrative and instrumental motivation, but states that the notions do not allow for the complexities of interactions between identity, power and language learning. Norton Peirce (1995) believes that French philosopher Bourdieu's

(1977) economic metaphors- primarily *cultural capital*- more accurately capture those relationships. In terms of investment, she states that “if learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital” (Norton Peirce, 1995, p. 17). Finally, Norton Peirce (1995) turns to Ogbu (1978) when she expounds on cultural capital in investment, saying that the gains from language learning are expected to be comparable to the energy utilized during the learning process. Investing and learning must be worth the time, effort and money spent. Though little spoken of by Norton Peirce (1995) in explicit terms, the idea of agency is important to the notion of investment. The following section expounds on the concept of agency.

Agency

Agency is also an incredibly important component in understanding the language learner (or any learner). In short it is “the capacity, condition, or state of acting or of exerting power” (Agency). Norton Peirce (1995) briefly mentions agency in her concept of investment, stating only that

...The subject has human agency. Thus the subject positions that a person takes up within a particular discourse are open to argument: Although a person may be positioned in a particular way within a given discourse, the person might resist the subject position or even set up a counterdiscourse which positions the person in a powerful rather than marginalized subject position. (p. 15-16)

McKay and Wong (1996) write that prior to the mid-nineties, works covering learner agency are very limited. However, several published, academic articles can now be

found that focus heavily on learner agency in education (Blair, 2009; Bown, 2009; Gao, 2010; Mercer, 2011). Blair (2009) writes of a fifth grade music class and the great desires the students have to learn and be understood as knowledgeable in musical understanding. Citing Greene (1995), Blair (2009) states, “The notion of agency includes, then, developing this sense of who we are, the agentive need to be valued for who we are, and the desire to fulfil imagined possibilities” (p. 179). Indeed, Gao (2010) and Mercer (2011) also present agency as one of the most basic of human qualities, which is often addressed in conjunction with learner autonomy.

Cultural Capital

Aforementioned is Bourdieu’s (1977) cultural capital, an essential component of Norton Peirce’s (1995) theory of investment and an extrinsic benefit of language learning. Bourdieu (1977) writes of cultural capital when discussing social class and the role that language has in defining each class in the minds of speakers. He states, “...a language is worth what those who speak it are worth, i.e. the power and authority in the economic and cultural power relations of the holders...” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 652). Kim and Kim (2009) also write of the distinctions that Bourdieu (1986) makes between economic capital and cultural capital, thereby conferring another understanding of cultural capital. While economic capital is tangible and objective, cultural capital can be intangible and subjective, making it harder to gather and track (Kim & Kim, 2009). Since its beginnings in a conversation on social class, cultural capital has developed as a concept and been subtly defined in different ways in multiple contexts (Alfred, 2009a;

DiMaggio, 1982; DiMaggio & Mohr, 1985; Kim & Kim, 2009; Roberts, 2004), one of which is language learning.

With reference to learning a language, Norton Peirce (1995) speaks of language learners increasing cultural capital through the acquisition of material and symbolic goods as their level of language increases, allowing them access to more places and people in a society. Symbolic resources refer to assets such as friendship, education and language while material resources speak of money, capital goods and property. Alfred (2003) writes of cultural capital not just in terms of gains made by learners, but also with regards to the cultural capital that a student brings to the learning process e.g. native culture and personal history.

In addition to Norton Peirce's (1995) emphasis on cultural capital in language learning is Smala, Paz and Lingard's (2013) paper on cultural capital, language and school choice in Australia. They write of linguistic capital and the desires of middle class, Australian parents to prepare their children for a globalized workplace, partially through immersion in a second (or other) language, which they view as a positional good. Though Smala et al. (2013) write of school age students and Norton Peirce (1995) of adult immigrants, the ideas are the same: linguistic and cultural capital. For both age groups, the goal of acquiring language is to improve one's life by opening up and making larger the opportunity pool.

Social Capital

Social capital is a concept related to cultural capital, also defined in subtly different ways by various scholars. One of Alfred's (2009b) primary research focuses is social capital, with which she has personal experience after growing up on the island of St. Lucia where friends and neighbors would come together to build a house or plant a field. She states, "...this concept of collaboration, networking, and sharing of resources within an element of trust for the improvement and well being of individuals and groups is referred to as social capital" (Alfred, 2010, p. 214). Social capital theory, relays Alfred (2010), has been much developed by Bourdieu (1977, 1986), Coleman (1988, 1998), and Putnam (2000). Bourdieu (1977, 1986) references social capital with regards to social inequality and how social capital can give one positional power. Coleman (1988, 1998) utilizes social capital in studying the communities of public and private grade schools, concluding that social capital could greatly assist economically marginalized communities. Putnam (2000) researches within the field of political science, claiming that "social capital serves both a bonding and bridging function" (Alfred, 2010, p. 217).

Alfred (2002, 2003, 2009a, 2009b, 2010) writes extensively on social capital concerning woman and education, adult learning and immigration. She believes that one benefit of social capital is solely the enjoyment of human connection; however, Lin (2001) disagrees, contending that a person who invests in a relationship is expecting a return for time and effort spent. Additionally, there are those who see the disadvantages of social capital (Anucha, Dlamini, Yang & Smylie, 2006; Bourdieu, 1986; Franklin, 2005; Lin, 2001; Portes & Landolt, 1996). Bourdieu (1986) recognizes that an

individual's access to much of social capital is pre-determined by one's social status.

Portes and Landolt (1996) also warn against the idea that social capital creates one happy community; indeed, few societies are homogeneous and few equally benefit all members.

While, then, there are warnings against and hesitations toward the idea of social capital, there are many who speak positively of its attributes. In terms of adult education, Falk and Kilpatrick (2000) "suggest that social capital results from learning interactions taking place in a social, political, and cultural context" (Alfred, 2009b, p. 9). Balatti and Falk (2001) even write specifically of growing social capital in the adult learning classroom through group work. What begins as an in-class project has the potential to expand beyond the classroom, developing and strengthening students' social networks. In their own research, Balatti and Falk (2001) conclude that using building blocks such as relationships, norms and trust aids in the growth of social capital. Therefore,

...even though there are inherent risks with social capital networks, with deliberate intent the classroom and the adult learning program can foster social capital development whereby learners capitalize on the resources to improve their living conditions and those of partner members. (Alfred, 2009b, p. 11)

Empowerment

King writes that "one of the predominant goals of adult education is to empower adults" (p. 77). Empowerment is an intrinsic benefit of language learning, though it is less often written of than the external benefits such as acquiring employment; still, there are several scholars who broach empowerment in their writings (Alfred, 2003; Alfred, 2009a; Bergin & LaFave, 1998; King, 2000; McMahonill, 1997; Zacharakis, et al., 2011).

Generally, the definition of ‘empower’ is “to promote the self-actualization or influence of” (Empower). A language student, then, can be empowered through the learning of a new language; her confidence and self-esteem are improved as she grows as an individual, or self-actualizes. King (2000) writes of the adult learners in her study achieving “...greater self-esteem and empowerment as they learned to cope with learning the new language and culture. This greater self-confidence affected what they did, how they related to others, and how they thought about themselves” (p. 77).

McMahill’s (1997) study of feminist English classes in Japan makes reference to the potential empowerment of its language learners. She writes that the English language can empower the Japanese women in the classes because the language allows more expressive freedom for females than Japanese, and requires more precise explanations.

Zacharakis, et al. (2011) conducted a qualitative study in which they desired to understand adult learners to a greater extent, and from which six primary themes became apparent. Within these themes, the authors directly connect the ideas of empowerment and agency. They write that this combined theme “connotes a person’s belief that he or she is sufficiently capable and has the necessary skills and knowledge to complete an action” and shows “a shift in perception of personal power as well as motivation to exercise control over environment and outcomes” (Zacharakis et al., 2011, p. 89).

Agency can certainly be understood as that “personal power” and the understanding that one is capable of doing something with that power follows with personal empowerment.

As often occurs in scholarly writings, Alfred (2009b) makes a connection between two ideas: social capital and empowerment. She writes specifically of a feminist

view of social capital and female empowerment, stating that amongst women, social capital can vary “from small initiatives within communities to address life’s daily challenges and threats to women’s empowerment or social and political movements that address women’s rights, both in local and global contexts” (Alfred, 2009b, p. 8). That is, under the umbrella of social capital, social networks and groups can form to protect the rights of women and even empower them to progress in and through movements.

Renowned educator Paulo Freire (1970) writes extensively about empowerment throughout his works on socioeconomically disadvantaged adult learners in the slums of Brazil, though he may not always use the term. He speaks of the need for education to be transformative, to empower individuals to create change in their own lives and in the world. In his perhaps most well known book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, there are two types of education: banking and problem-posing.

Whereas banking education anesthetizes and inhibits creative power, problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality. The former attempts to maintain the *submersion* of consciousness; the latter strives for the *emergence* of consciousness and *critical intervention* in reality. (Freire, 1970, p. 81)

That is, banking education seeks simply to deposit information in students while problem-posing pushes learners to be creative and develop their own solutions for issues, thus empowering them.

McKinney and Norton (2008) also mention empowerment without calling it such. They write briefly of the connection between extrinsic and intrinsic benefits in language learning. “As the value of their cultural capital increases, so learners’ sense of themselves and their desires for the future are reassessed” (McKinney & Norton, 2008, p. 195). A student’s ‘sense of herself’ can certainly be understood as agency and

reassessment generally leads to an increased sense of empowerment as she expands her proficiency in English.

It is important to note also that empowerment is an up and coming buzzword in the world of social justice, an arena in which language learning/education is often vital to success. ‘These Numbers Have Faces’ is a South African initiative that seeks to provide financial assistance to students who desire to attend college. A stipulation of the program is that the students become involved in their communities; the ultimate goal is “empowering future leaders to reduce poverty in their own communities.”

The following section brings together the aforementioned key concepts-- investment, agency, cultural capital, social capital and empowerment-- and presents the methodology used in this study.

METHODOLOGY

Because Norton Peirce’s (1995) notion of investment takes a full view of language learning, taking into account the student’s current circumstances, personal history, etc., a clearer picture of the learner is provided. The theory of investment does not take a single snap shot, but rather delves into understanding the language learner, and the gives and takes of the language learning process. Accordingly, data collection is an involved, and long term operation, and consequently, a qualitative approach was employed in this study due to the subjective, interpretive nature of the research topic, personal connection with the participants, and in-person methods of data collection (Gall, et al., 2007). In particular, this study employed a form of the Case Study, in

following with Gall et al.'s (2007) features of a case study: “(a) the in-depth study of (b) one or more instances of a phenomenon (c) in its real-life context that (d) reflects the perspectives of the participants involved in the phenomenon” (p. 447).

Participants

Three participants were selected from a nonacademic, advanced ESL class through convenient and purposeful sampling. Three criteria guided participant selection - being an adult, female and a regular attendee of the ESL class. Four women were originally approached based on their language proficiency, however just three agreed to participate. The three individuals are all female and originally from Mexico, thereby having a common native language, Spanish. As reported in Chapter I, women were the focal gender in this study, and without intention, these three happened to share the same first language. The participants also range in age from their mid-thirties to mid-forties, and are both wife and mother in a nuclear family.

Data Collection

Data was collected using three methods: individual interview, group interview, a written questionnaire and observation. Dr. Bonny Norton developed the questionnaire during her PhD studies and graciously allowed its use in this study; it was translated into Spanish (see Appendix A). The informal group interview was held with all three participants and the casual individual interview was conducted with each woman and myself. A list of guiding questions was compiled from a few scholars in the discipline

(Buttaro, 2004; Igoudin, 2008; Kim, 2011; Norton Peirce, 1995; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002) and myself (see Appendix B). Finally, I observed the three participants in a class setting using an observation instrument I developed from Igoudin (2008). The observation instrument recorded specific visible markers of investment (or lack thereof): attendance, active listening, notes/writing, reading, solicited and voluntary verbal participation, group effort, and distraction (see Appendix C).

Data Analysis

After collection, the data was examined in light of research questions 1 and 4-5, which examine the connection between investment in language learning and benefits reaped. As stated in Chapter I, the questions are as follows:

1. What motivates adult female ELLs in a nonacademic learning environment to invest in language learning?
4. Do adult female ELLs in a nonacademic, advanced ESL class feel they have accomplished the goals they set out to achieve?
5. To adult female ELLs in a nonacademic learning environment, are the costs of investing in learning worth the benefits gained? Why or why not?

Additionally, Gall et al. (2007) establish narratives as “the use of a communication format to organize interpretive representations and explanations of personal and social experience” (p. 519). Therefore, following analysis, data is presented in a narrative structure in the same vein as Norton Peirce’s (1995) and Skilton-Sylvester’s (2002) published pieces.

Due to its qualitative nature, it is essential to understand the context in which this study took place. Gall et al. (2007) list many characteristics of qualitative research; one states that it is the “study of human actions in natural settings” (p. 32). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) also assert that

Qualitative research is multimethod in its focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 2)

I, then, provide the reader with a frame of reference for this study. The ESL class from which participants were selected is a small city of approximately 13,000 in Texas where oil is the primary business. This industry draws many (predominantly Latin American) immigrants to the area and creates a need for English classes. This need is filled by a non-profit group from another nearby city; their English classes are open to all, though students must be registered at the beginning of each semester. The students must only pay for their textbook and workbook. In the past, these English classes have been all women, however one man joined this last semester, subtly altering the feel and discussions in the class. It was not a blatant change, but there was somewhat less conversation about the women’s husbands and fewer unconscious references to gender and roles.

ANALYSIS

The following accounts of this study’s three participants present a type of *before* and *after* picture of their experiences investing in English learning. Why the women invested functions as the *before*, that is, what they desired to do and learn toward the

beginning of their investment experience. The intrinsic and extrinsic benefits reaped from investing in English serve as the *after* photo. Have the women gained what they sought to gain? And has the journey been worth the end result?

Gloria: "I feel good, I feel stronger."

Gloria is a woman in her mid-forties who married an American national of Mexican heritage about eighteen months ago. Originally from Mexico, she spent time in Canada and California before arriving in Texas where she would meet her future husband. At seventeen, Gloria started working at a bank and attending university in Mexico, where she studied business administration. She was unable to complete her degree in university because her father broke his back and she had to leave school to work more and care for her siblings. Gloria's identity as a daughter kept her from further education at that point in time.

After working at the bank for nearly fourteen years, Gloria took a vacation to Canada with her sister and friend where they ended up staying for six months of sightseeing, working and taking English classes. While the women did not originally intend to stay so long, they did and so began working to support themselves while there. Gloria recalled her inability to buy something as small as a soda because she couldn't speak the language in Canada. Due to instances like that and in preparation to work, Gloria took about two months of English classes. Her identities as a sister, friend and adventurer led her to Canada where she first invested in learning English. The women needed some English to work in order to have the finances to stay for a longer period of

time, and so one sees that Gloria's identity as a worker greatly influenced her investment in English. The Cambridge dictionary defines "investment" in short as "the act of putting money or effort into something to make a profit or achieve a result" (Investment). Gloria chose to give time and effort to language learning to gain the benefits; in her case, the benefit was the ability to stay in Canada due to the money earned at work.

Some time after being in Canada, Gloria found herself in a large city in Texas working at a truck store owned by her cousin. In contrast to her identity as a worker in Canada, her worker identity at this store did not push her to invest in learning English. Most of her interactions were in Spanish and she stated that in her two years there she learned "5% English;" there simply was no need for her to learn in order to live or work there. However, Gloria did meet her husband at the truck store, as he is a truck driver. Almost four years after first encountering him, they were married and she moved to a small Texas city with him. The family Gloria married into is an English speaking family where she was pushed to invest in English learning again. She has since reaped numerous benefits.

In talking with Gloria, I have seen her demonstrate her power as an English learner and speaker, that is, her agency. As defined above, agency is "the capacity, condition, or state of acting or of exerting power" (Agency). While Gloria may or may not know the term agency, she appears to comprehend her own power and knows how to use it in social situations to her advantage, according to her self-recounted experiences. Like Blair's (2009) fifth grade music class that wanted to understand and be understood as musically knowledgeable, Gloria wants to understand and be understood as a

legitimate English speaker. Her experiences show her asserting herself, for example with the cable television company.

As a truck driver, her husband can be gone for two or more days at a time, and a few months ago when he was away, the cable stopped working at Gloria's house. She did not wait for the native English-speaking members of her family to remedy the situation, but rather took charge and called the cable company herself. This is how she described it:

...I don't know how long ago, I went to the cable. I call the cable because my cable don't work. I'm speak English...so, oh my god, and I understand, I can explain and I'm not sure, I went to the office...the same I explain. Total perfect, everything perfect. So say, 'Oh, Gloria, you can do it. In the phone, face to face.'
(Gloria, personal communication, April 4, 2013)

Gloria's rising confidence and application of her power, her agency, in the world is certainly a benefit gained from her investment in English learning. It is as King's (2000) adult ELLs report in her study: "...they gained greater self-esteem and empowerment as they learned to cope with learning the new language and culture. This greater self-confidence affected what they did, how they related to others, and how they thought about themselves" (p. 77).

The reader will recall Norton Peirce's (1995) understanding of cultural capital as it relates to her research and theory of investment: that as a person invests in language learning, she may grow her cultural capital, that is, her material and symbolic resources. Symbolic resources refer to assets such as friendship, education and language while material resources speak of money, capital goods and property. As she has continued to invest in English, Gloria has absolutely increased her cultural capital as witnessed by her

own experiences. I will broaden Norton Peirce's (1995) symbolic resource of 'friendship' to 'relationships.' Similarly, Alfred (2009b) writes, "Social capital theory assumes that a person's family, friends, and associates constitute an important asset that can be capitalized in times of need, leveraged for capital gain, or enjoyed purely for the human interaction it affords" (p. 5). The concepts of cultural capital and social capital are exceedingly similar and interconnected and here, they intersect at the understood value and benefit of relationships with family and friends. Gloria even stated, "Because I'm speaking English, I feel good. I can be good with my husband, with his family, with his friends" (Gloria, personal communication, April 4, 2013).

Gloria has obtained tremendous benefits in terms of personal relationships due to her investment in language. First, her relationship with her husband has improved since they married; she has been able to communicate better as her English has improved. She spoke about the beginning of their marriage, when they would attend parties, and she could not leave her husband's side because she couldn't communicate with anyone else. She felt bad for her husband and herself. Remembering those occasions, she said, "Now I feel [like a] person...now I feel the party or I feel person...Gloria is Gloria...before is 'Daniel's wife,' but she don't speak English. So bad. Now, 'I'm Gloria. Nice to meet you' " (Gloria, personal communication, March 7, 2013). Her husband also feels better now that she is able to communicate more with his adult children, who only speak English, and during social situations.

Second, her improving English has allowed Gloria to generate closer relationships with her husband's grown children. This is how she described it:

Now I feel better because my situation in life is crazy because I don't have the kids, but my husbands' kids talk to me like 'mom.' So they don't speak any Spanish so the boy, his mom left...when the girl is two years old and the boy four so they don't have a mom. So they talk to me and 'Gloria, I need some' or 'She cry...' I can say nothing. Now, I can try help and 'No...look, don't say that' or now I can talk...very important conversation because that is important for my husband, too, and for my life...his kids talk to me and I try to help, he feel better...and the grandbabies, too... (Gloria, personal communication, March 7, 2013)

Her investment in English has been exceedingly beneficial for not only Gloria, but also the whole family. The adult son lives with Gloria and her husband, Daniel, and as seen above, he and the daughter interact with Gloria as a mother figure. The two adult children come to her when they need advice or help, and they entrust their collective three children to Gloria's care on a near daily basis.

Gloria has also gained significant intrinsic benefits. When she first moved in with her husband and met his family and friends, she couldn't hold a conversation in English. She felt awful, and in her own words: "I'm zero" (Gloria, personal communication, April 4, 2013). She told of going to the tax office in the past and simply leaving when she couldn't talk with the employee there. More than once, she spoke of her embarrassment that she couldn't speak English in public or social situations. Interestingly, it was not the native English speakers that she was embarrassed in front of, but rather other native Spanish speakers who were fully fluent in English. Now, having invested much time and effort into acquiring English, Gloria is no longer embarrassed or scared to speak: "...before just thinking, I'm scared. Now, any problem, I don't scare anymore" (Gloria, personal communication, April 4, 2013).

In our interview, Gloria stated that she invests in English for herself: “Number one is me” (Gloria, personal communication, March 7, 2013). And indeed, her acquisition of English has been intrinsically beneficial, as it has empowered her, and increased her confidence and self-esteem. This is clearly evident in her lack of embarrassment now to engage in an English conversation. Even in our interviews, she threw herself into the discussion without hesitating or searching for words. And now, she is even able to translate for others: “I feel good. I go somewhere and some people don’t speak English, ask me if I can help in English” (Gloria, personal communication, April 4, 2013). Investing in English has empowered Gloria by allowing her more access to people and places in society, *and* to feel strong and confident as a person. She said it like this: “Because all my life’s changed. I feel good, I feel stronger. All around is better...in my person” (Gloria, personal communication, March 7, 2013).

When asked if it’s worth it, if the effort of learning is worth what she has gained, Gloria immediately replied, “Of course. Yes. Oh, 100%” (Gloria, personal communication, April 4, 2013).

Teresa: “Is for me...and now I feel happy.”

Teresa is from a small town in Mexico where grade school only went to the ninth grade. After completing ninth grade, she moved in with a family in a larger city in Mexico in order to attend more school and to work. However, Teresa missed her family very much and returned home after just three months. At the age of 17, she tried again, moving in with her sister in another large city; this did not last either and she went home

where she began dating someone. Her recently acquired boyfriend traveled to the United States (US) where he found work and stayed for approximately a year, calling Teresa and writing her letters. When she was 19, he returned to their hometown in Mexico and the two were married. They soon left and traveled back to the US where her new husband had a job.

Now, Teresa is in her mid-thirties and has been living in the United States for 15 years with her husband and their three sons, who are in grade school. She has chosen to invest in learning English and has since reaped significant benefits both internally and externally. Though, she is seemingly naturally demure, somewhat hesitant, and soft spoken, there is evidence in her self-recounted experiences that point to her increasing sense of agency, which is, again, generally defined as “the capacity, condition, or state of acting or of exerting power” (Agency). She can be seen using her personal power to take charge of situations from food sale preparation to her own health as a result of her investment in English. Whether or not she realizes exactly that she is exercising what scholars call human agency, she *is* doing it.

One example of this increasing sense of self-agency is in fundraising for her church’s new building fund. Teresa described it like this: “I have group de six person with me, but me is leader. So I need call everybody when it’s time to sell food and the organization, the food, the menu and I need go the for buy, buy in Sams, the grocery, everything...” (Teresa, personal communication, April 9, 2013). She has taken up a position of leadership in which she can be successful due in part to her investment in English. This is certainly a display of personal agency and a benefit of investment.

Another relational benefit of investment is Teresa's ability to connect more with English speaking members of her church. As mentioned, she leads a group of women who make breakfast to sell in order to raise money for the church. Part of that is, of course, setting up the room and in the past she had trouble getting what she needed out of the closet at the church. She said, "Before, I can't explain I need open the door because I need towels, I need plates, everything, spoon, and but now I can explain and understand" (Teresa, personal communication, April 9, 2013).

Norton Peirce (1995), as aforementioned, states that when students invest in language learning, they understand that they will increase their material and symbolic resources, which include education, language, friendship, real estate, money and capital goods. These resources expand the learner's cultural capital as increased language proficiency allows her access to more places and people in society. Though Norton Peirce (1995) uses the term 'friendship,' I broaden that to 'relationships.' And Teresa has indeed benefitted by increasing her range and quality of relationships as she has invested in language learning. For example, she can communicate more efficiently with her children's teachers and doctors. In particular, Teresa's oldest son has behavioral abnormalities and she is able to speak with his doctor to get advice and tips on how to deal with certain issues.

Teresa's relationships with her family have also benefitted as she has become the primary adult English speaker in her household. Her husband speaks only a little English for his work, so she carries the weight of the English communications outside the home. She described his reaction to her English education: "He say you studying English for

you can help in the house because he, he say he has a problem when he need leer or write. He say for me is better” (Teresa, personal communication, April 9, 2013; ‘leer’ means ‘to read’). She buys the groceries, pays the bills, speaks with teachers and doctors, and even helps her husband fill out forms for his job such as insurance renewal papers. Teresa also assists the children with their homework in English where she can. Her investment in English has enhanced her relationships in the home and outside the home as her access to people and places has expanded, and smoothed a way for her family’s success in the US.

Part of Teresa’s cultural capital that has increased is clearly her language skills. This will aid her greatly in her future work endeavors. While she is currently not working so she can be home with her children, she has every intention of returning to work when they are older. In the past, Teresa worked with a catering business that cooked for oil companies (a major industry in the area) and events such as weddings. The owners were English speakers and Teresa was able to establish a solid rapport with them as they invested time and resources in her, taking the time to teach her English on the job. She began investing in English even then, and her continued investment greatly benefits her future opportunities. As she stated,

...with the time understand what important is come to English and my goal is, I learn my textbooks. I hope...I understand more English, I can speak English better for one day go back work with them. And maybe when they more older, they need more help and I love my boss. I hope can help. (Teresa, personal communication, April 9, 2013)

Several scholars write of social interaction as a reason for investment and also a benefit gained (Alfred, 2009b; Horsman, 1990; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002; Skilton-

Sylvester & Carlo, 1998). Social capital, according to Alfred (2009b), *can* be just about enjoying interaction with other humans without necessarily seeking to gain anything from the other person in the relationship. That simple social interaction was a major push behind Teresa's decision to invest in her ESL class. Before, she was very depressed and stressed and not sleeping and her church pastor advised her to attend the English class, amongst other things. To Alfred (2009b), this simple human interaction is categorized as social capital and Teresa has absolutely benefitted from it. Her health is better and her depression is less in part as a result of her investment in her English class.

A primary intrinsic benefit that Teresa has gained is a sense of empowerment, confidence and increased self-esteem. In fact, she stated, "...I need speak English for have success in me self" (Teresa, personal communication, April 9, 2013). That desire to better herself and her life was a force pushing her to invest and has since resulted in repeated benefits. When she was employed by the catering business and had occasions when she successfully used English, she expressed how happy she was. When asked how she felt about her level of English now, she replied thus,

I feel happy because...I guess before when I come for English class, I come only because other person tell me is good study English. Me say ok, but for inside me, no, no important. Now inside me, is very very important. Cause my...what is in English...is mi motivo...my motivation. I come here because it's inside me, that is good. Not for other person tell me is good. Is for me...and now I feel happy. (Teresa, personal communication, March 7, 2013)

When asked if it's worth it, if the effort of learning is worth what she has achieved, Teresa replied, "It's nothing in comparison what we gain with we speak English" (Teresa, personal communication, April 9, 2013). That is, the work and time and effort are nothing compared to what she has gained. In this case, the end most

certainly justifies the means. She ended with this advice for other learners: “Yes, keep coming...and perseverar, yes” (Teresa, personal communication, April 9, 2013; ‘perseverar’ means ‘persevere’).

Silvia: “If you want, you can.”

Originally from Mexico, Silvia came to the United States a little over eleven years ago and was married to her husband. In her mid-thirties, Silvia is now a wife and mother of two grade school children in a nuclear family. While her mother still lives in Mexico, her siblings live in the US; at least one has married an American national who speaks English, but most of Silvia’s brothers and sisters and their spouses speak Spanish regularly. Despite much of her nuclear and extended family being native Spanish speakers, Silvia’s investment in English has absolutely had an impact on her life, benefitting herself and those around her, both intrinsically and extrinsically.

Silvia stated more than once that her first goal in learning and investing in English was for herself. In her own words,

...because always I talk with my husband and say I want to go to English class because I want to learn more and more English because sometimes I feel sad or angry or embarrassed...or when another people is the same Mexican but they speak more English. And when I speak English they, ‘Oh, she can’t speak.’ I feel sad or embarrassed. (Silvia, personal communication, March 7, 2013)

Until she helped herself, she could not help her family or other people. She began investing because she felt bad inside- sad, shameful, embarrassed, angry- and she has reaped the benefits of the time and effort spent learning English for over seven years.

In our interviews, she spoke multiple times of feeling good with regards to her language abilities and all she can do with English now- the intrinsic and extrinsic benefits gained thus far. For example, she recently fixed the title on her truck and went to the tax office to pay some taxes, all using her English. Another recent event occurred at a store- Silvia was able to assist somebody who didn't speak any English to return a CD. She said, "I feel good because I can help" (Silvia, personal communication, April 2, 2013). These self-recounted examples display both internal and external products of Silvia's language investment. She can complete activities and family-related duties with her English and consequently, she feels better and more confident inside.

She has been able to exercise her English in authentic situations, confirming her language capabilities and I believe, gaining confidence. Without perhaps knowing the term 'agency,' Silvia is employing her personal power, agency, in society every time she utilizes the English she has learned. King (2000) writes of her adult participants gaining "...greater self-esteem and empowerment as they learned to cope with learning the new language and culture. This greater self-confidence affected what they did, how they related to others, and how they thought about themselves" (p. 77). Freire (1970) also writes of the empowerment of adult learners as they changed their own circumstances. Silvia is more able to change and better her circumstances now because she can communicate with the society in which she lives. Of this she said,

...seven years ago I don't speak English nothing. Now I feel good in my person because I can help...Now I can take a little conversation with the person but before nothing. Is quiet. I can buy. I can go to the store myself and I can buy something. The cashier asks me something. I understand. I answer the question. And that's I feel. I feel better, I feel good. (Silvia, personal communication, March 7, 2013)

Increased cultural capital is without doubt a benefit. Again, cultural capital indicates resources such as friendship, education, language, money, capital goods and property (Norton Peirce, 1995). Silvia's investment in English has certainly increased her cultural capital as Norton Peirce's (1995) notion of investment believed it would. Throughout the years as Silvia has invested time and effort into learning English, her language skills have clearly advanced. And this in turn has led to changes in her relationships, which I use as a broader term than Norton Peirce's (1995) 'friendship.' To begin, Silvia's relationships with her husband and children have benefitted.

Silvia's husband works in the oil industry drilling and/or cleaning holes in the oil fields. His job requires him to keep a written record of everything he does from cleaning the holes to caring for the company truck he drives, and all in English. Silvia helps him with writing as he knows little English. Indeed, her husband has consistently supported her endeavor to learn English saying, "If you want, you can" (Silvia, personal communication, April 2, 2013). Silvia has since taken this phrase and uses it often as a kind of mantra. Her experiences indicate that her investment in English has obviously benefitted her relationship with her spouse.

Silvia's increased cultural capital has also been advantageous for her relationships with her two school age children as well. She assists them with their homework, math, science, spelling, etc. and feels great satisfaction. Of this she said,

...I feel good when I or 'Mom, can you help me?' and say 'Oh thank you, mom.' Or when everyday we study for the spelling words in the morning and I feel happy when she came for other Friday, no Thursday it happened...'100 mom!' and I feel good because [my husband] say, 'Yes because you help her.' (Silvia, personal communication, April 2, 2013)

In this instance, the external benefits for Silvia's relationships with her children are revealed in their schoolwork and her ability to help them. This also benefits her intrinsically by giving her a sense of fulfillment and pride that she can help her children. Moreover, she is able to more easily speak with their teachers and doctors, even acting as a translator for other parents at her children's school.

These improved relationships with doctors and teachers and cashiers at a store also fall under the category of increased social capital. Similar to cultural capital, social capital refers to the advantages gained from relationships and improving those relations, including even store employees with whom Silvia can now communicate more effectively. As discussed above, Bourdieu (1977, 1986) references social capital in terms of how social capital can give one positional power. Comprehending and using English clearly gives Silvia power to receive answers and steer conversations where she needs them to go; for example, in conferences with her children's teachers, Silvia can talk about their progress and behavior. She said, "...with [my daughter's] teacher because in the past I always somebody they need translate me and now I talk with her and I feel orgullosa" (Silvia, personal communication, April 2, 2013; 'orgullosa' means 'proud').

Silvia's self-told experiences display the many internal and external benefits she has gained from investing in the English language. When asked if investing in English is worth the time and effort it requires to be effective and successful, Silvia replied without hesitation: "Yes. Is no easy but is...vale la pena because we feel more sure in our person, and feel orgullosa when you help another being, and when I go to everywhere

and speak a little with the American people” (Silvia, personal communication, April 2, 2013; ‘vale la pena’ means ‘it is worth the pain’).

DISCUSSION

This chapter focused on the link between investment and benefits. In short, did Gloria, Teresa and Silvia gain what they sought to gain when they invested in the English language? And has the journey been worth the end result? While all three women show and state a desire to continue their English education with the intention of becoming more proficient in the language, they also show and state clearly examples of success in their endeavors thus far.

All three women stated repeatedly their satisfaction regarding the internal results of investing and learning: they feel better and more confident. Their self-recounted experiences demonstrate that increased confidence and sense of empowerment as each is able to do more in society and communicate better with the American populace in English. The women also reported repeated external benefits from being able to purchase a pizza in a restaurant to being much closer to seeking employment to being able to talk with family members.

The best way to an authentic answer is a straight question, and that is exactly what this study did. While many other scholars and researchers have recorded the benefits and advantages gained that they saw in their participants’ lives, this study asked outright, “Vale la pena?” Is it worth it? Are the long hours and large amount of effort worth the language one gains? Unanimously, the women replied yes. While not an

unexpected answer, the confirmation from these three participants is absolute. The gains are worth the pains.

Language Level: Perceived Twice

Each participant self-assessed her own language level on the background questionnaire. It is interesting to see the differences and similarities between their assessments and mine, which I made as I talked with and observed them throughout data collection.

Gloria described herself as a “much worse” speaker than native English speakers and a “better” speaker than other ELLs. She also wrote that after two semesters in the ESL class, she can understand a lot more English. In spite of her belief that she speaks “much worse,” Gloria continues to invest in learning. Based on my conversations with her and observing her in class, I believe that she is certainly a better speaker than many other ELLs, however I disagree that she is much worse than native English speakers. While she is at a lower level than native speakers, she can converse easily with them. I understand Gloria to be a more proficient speaker than she thinks herself to be. At the same time, her self-perceived language inadequacies appear to serve to encourage her continued investment.

Teresa reported that she speaks “a little worse” than other ELLs and native English speakers. She also wrote that she has acquired “some” or “a little” more English in the four primary areas of writing, listening, reading and speaking, though it is still hard to comprehend English in many of her encounters with English speakers. I spent

many hours talking with and observing Teresa and I agree with part of her self-assessment; that of being less adept in the language than native English speakers. However, I diverge from her evaluation and state that Teresa is as proficient a speaker of English as many other ELLs. Although Teresa herself may feel like she is not a very advanced English user, she persists in investing her time and effort in the learning process. She is pushed and encouraged, I believe, by her accomplishments thus far and future benefits she seeks to gain.

Like Teresa, Silvia wrote that she speaks English “a little worse” than native English speakers and other ELLs on her background questionnaire. For her, most of her encounters in English are “hard” or “very hard.” She appears to have little confidence in her status as an advanced English learner, as also demonstrated by her desire to learn more and more English before obtaining a job-- she has been in the ESL class for seven years. Having spent time conversing with and observing Silvia in class, I understand her level of English to be higher than she believes it to be-- her proficiency level is comparable to many other ELLs. Regardless of her own negative belief about her English, Silvia is committed to investing in language learning.

Implications

The implications of this study speak to both educators and adult students alike. Instructors of adult female ELLs must be aware that the needs and motives behind each learner’s investment and what she is seeking to accomplish are unique to her. This awareness can better help educators to prepare students for life with a new language.

This study also speaks to adult students, particularly adult females ELLs in nonacademic settings. The participants of this study recounted their experiences not only to me, but also for others like themselves. Their experiences provide stories of success and encouragement for other language learners, while acknowledging the difficulties along the way.

Limitations

This study had a couple of limitations. The first was a lack of time; more time with the participants could provide more data for an even more complete picture of their experiences learning English. A second limitation was embedded in the very nature of qualitative research, which is partially based on subjectivity and interpretation of the topic. I worked to avoid any positionality bias (Takacs, 2003) by giving the reader many quotes from the participants. In this way, the reader is not simply taking in my interpretation of the women's self-recounted stories, but also being given the chance to form her own thoughts about the experiences of these three adult female ELLs.

Future Research

There are multiple studies that can stem from this study and most are similar variations with different foci. One possibility is to conduct a study identical to this one with a maximum variation sample, varying by ethnicity, first language and/or socioeconomic status. A second possibility is another identical study with a different sample of adult female ELLs in the same location to corroborate the findings of this

study. A third suggestion for future research is to investigate language investment and benefits, comparing the self-recounted experiences of female and male learners.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

As understood from the discussions of Chapters II and III, the concepts of investment, identity and benefits in language learning are complex, intricate and interwoven. One idea cannot be considered without including at least one other notion. These are also important ideas to remember throughout the whole of language education and adults, and certainly there is still much to learn about them.

IMPLICATIONS

My desire is that the research on language investment, identity and the benefits of learning English with these particular participants in their particular setting can be disseminated to teachers of this population. One goal is that the words of this particular sample can be transmitted to and encourage other adult female ELLs in nonacademic settings. A second aim is that educators better understand their adult language learners in order to more efficiently prepare them for new situations. This understanding involves the acknowledgment, acceptance and appreciation of the individuality of each student, and using that knowledge to instruct in a way that best suits the learner.

LIMITATIONS

This study has a couple of limitations. One involved what Norton (2008) describes as “the complexities of qualitative research” (p. 51). Indeed, this qualitative

study's discussions and conclusions were largely subjective interpretations of the participants' experiences. However, I attempted to offset any positionality bias (Takacs, 2003) by providing plentiful quotes from the women so that the reader might have the opportunity to see something else in their words.

A second limitation was time. Hindsight is 20/20 and more interview time with the participants could certainly have revealed further conclusions. In the future, I suggest at least two individual interviews, and if possible, home visits.

FUTURE LINES OF RESEARCH

First, I recommend that further research be conducted with adult female ELLs, but with a sample varying by ethnicity, first language and/or socioeconomic status- a maximum variation sample as opposed to the homogeneous sample of this study.

Second, It would also be beneficial to conduct a second, identical study with another group of adult female ELLs in the same area to substantiate the findings of this study.

Third, I recommend a study of similar participants that focuses on differences between male and female learners. The women in this study made several interesting comments throughout our interviews regarding gender role differences in language learning, which could certainly constitute an entire study.

Finally, a study comparing the experiences of ELLs between English speaking nations such as the United States, Canada, and Australia would greatly benefit language learning literature. The official and most commonly spoken language in all these

countries is English, but, for example, how necessary is it to invest in learning English?

Is English a must to survive or is it not? And is this different between nations?

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE (English)

Please complete this questionnaire as carefully as you can. If you need more space, please write on the back of the page. There are no right or wrong answers. You may say good things and bad things. No one will see your answers except the researcher (Anna Wharton). If you do not understand any part of the questionnaire, you may ask the researcher. Any written section may be written in English and/or Spanish. Thank you!

A. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

1 a) Name: _____

b) Male ☐ or Female ☐ (please x)

2. Telephone number: _____

3. Date of birth: _____

4. Place of birth: _____

5. a) Are you married? Yes ☐ or No ☐

b) Do you have children? Yes ☐ or No ☐

c) Please give their age and sex. _____

6. Please give the highest level of education you have received.

Elementary school	<input type="checkbox"/>
High school	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community college/technical/business school	<input type="checkbox"/>
University degree (e.g.) B.A., B.Sc.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Graduate or professional degree (e.g. M.A.; accountancy)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

B. LANGUAGE BACKGROUND

1. What is your first language (native language)? _____

2. a) Did you know any English before you came to the United States? Yes ☐ or No ☐

b) If yes, how much English did you know and how did you learn it?

3. a) Apart from your first language and English, do you know any other languages? Yes [] or No []

b) If yes, *what* languages are they, and *when* and *where* did you learn them?

C. IMMIGRATION INFORMATION

1. *When* did you come to the United States? (month and year): _____

2. *Why* did you come to the United States? _____

3. a). Did you have friends in the United States before you arrived? Yes [] or No []

b). Did you have family in the United States before you arrived? Yes [] or No []

4. a) Before you arrived in the United States, did you live anywhere else apart from your home country?

Yes [] or No []

b) If *yes*, state where and for how long: _____

D. HOUSING

1. Are you living alone, with friends, or with family? _____

2. Where did you stay when you first arrived in the United States? _____
3. a) Have you changed your address since your arrival? Yes [] or No []

b) If yes, how often and why? _____

4. How long have you been at your present address? _____

E. ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILL

1. Comparing yourself to people who speak English as their first language, how well do you think you speak English? (Please circle):

About the same

A little worse

Much worse

2. Comparing yourself to other immigrants you know who are learning English, how well do you think you speak English? (Please circle):

Much better

Better

About the same

A little worse

Much worse

F. WORK EXPERIENCE

1. What work did you do in your home country? _____
2. What work experience have you had since you arrived in the United States? Please complete the chart below.

DATE (month/year)	PLACE OF WORK	TYPE OF WORK	FULL/PART TIME
-------------------	---------------	--------------	----------------

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

3. a) Do you have a job right now? Yes [] or No []

b) Are you happy with this job? Yes [] or No []

c) If *no*, what job would you like? What do you need to get this job?

4. Does the work you are doing now help you to learn English? Please explain.

G. THE ENGLISH CLASS

1. How did you find out about this English class? _____

2. In general, how much English have you learned in this English class? (Please circle):

A lot Some A little None

3. Is there anything specific you have learned from the course that has been most helpful?

4. In general, how much English have you learned in these areas? (Please circle your answers.)

	<u>A lot</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>A little</u>	<u>None</u>
Listening	1	2	3	4
Speaking	1	2	3	4
Reading	1	2	3	4
Writing	1	2	3	4

5. How do you think this English class might be **changed** to help students learn English better?

6. What have you *not* learned that you would like to learn?

H. LANGUAGE CONTACTS

Please circle your answers to these questions:

	<u>All</u>	<u>Most</u>	<u>Some</u>	<u>A few</u>	<u>None</u>
1. How many of the people in your neighborhood speak English as a first language?	1	2	3	4	5
2. How many of the people you work with speak English as a first language?	1	2	3	4	5
3. How many of your friends speak English as a first language?	1	2	3	4	5
4. How many of your friends have the same first language as you do?	1	2	3	4	5

I. EXTENT OF ENGLISH USAGE

In this section, I would like to know how often you use English. Please circle your answer.

	<u>Every day</u>	<u>Two or three times a week</u>	<u>Once a week</u>	<u>Once or twice a month</u>	<u>Never</u>
1. How often do you speak English in your home?	1	2	3	4	5
2. How often do you speak English outside your home?	1	2	3	4	5
3. How often do you speak English to:					
a) your husband/wife	1	2	3	4	5
b) your children/grandchildren	1	2	3	4	5
c) your relatives	1	2	3	4	5
d) friends	1	2	3	4	5
e) neighbors	1	2	3	4	5

f) employers/supervisors	1	2	3	4	5
g) clients/customers	1	2	3	4	5
h) other workers	1	2	3	4	5
i) school teachers	1	2	3	4	5
j) doctors/dentists/nurses	1	2	3	4	5
k) shop/bank employees	1	2	3	4	5
l) government officials	1	2	3	4	5
m) others _____	1	2	3	4	5

4. How often do you read English notices and pamphlets? 1 2 3 4 5

5. How often do you read English newspapers and books? 1 2 3 4 5

6. How often do you watch English TV or English movies? 1 2 3 4 5

7. How often do you listen to English radio programs? 1 2 3 4 5

8. How often do you write in English? 1 2 3 4 5

9. What kinds of radio programs do you listen to in English? _____

10. What kinds of things do you write in English? _____

J. SELF ASSESSMENT OF ENGLISH PROGRESS

1. In general, how **easy** or **hard** is it for you to use **English** to do the following things?

	<u>Very easy</u>	<u>Easy</u>	<u>Hard</u>	<u>Very hard</u>
a) Speak to your husband/wife	1	2	3	4

b) Speak to your children/grandchildren	1	2	3	4
c) Speak to other relatives	1	2	3	4
d) Speak to friends	1	2	3	4
e) Speak to neighbors	1	2	3	4
f) Speak to employers/supervisors	1	2	3	4
g) Speak to clients/customers	1	2	3	4
h) Speak to other workers	1	2	3	4
i) Speak to teachers/doctors/dentists	1	2	3	4
j) Speak to shop attendants/clerks	1	2	3	4
k) Speak to government officials	1	2	3	4
l) Speak to people you don't know	1	2	3	4
m) Read a newspaper.	1	2	3	4
n) Watch TV/movies	1	2	3	4
o) Listen to the radio.	1	2	3	4
p) Fill out forms and questionnaires	1	2	3	4
q) Write letters	1	2	3	4

2. In general, when do you feel **comfortable** using English and when do you feel **uncomfortable** using English? Please explain.

K. THE LEARNING PROCESS

1. What do you think has helped you the most to learn English?

2. If your English is better, what are you able to do **now** that you were not able to do a year ago?

3. When you become a very good speaker of English, what will you be able to do **in the future**

that you are not able to do now?

L. LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

1. Please reply to the following questions by answering 'YES!' if you strongly agree, 'yes' if you agree, 'no' if you do not agree, 'NO!' if you strongly disagree.

	<u>YES!</u>	<u>yes</u>	<u>no</u>	<u>NO!</u>
a) Would you like more chances to speak English?	1	2	3	4
b) Would you like more chances to write English?	1	2	3	4
c) Do men have more chances to speak English than women?	1	2	3	4
d) Do children have more chances to speak English than adults?	1	2	3	4
e) Would you like more English speaking friends?	1	2	3	4
f) Are Americans helpful when you try to speak English?	1	2	3	4
g) Do you have to speak English to do well in America?	1	2	3	4
h) Would you get a better job if your English were better?	1	2	3	4
i) Do your children speak better English than you?	1	2	3	4
j) Will you lose contact with your children if you do not learn English?	1	2	3	4
k) Will you lose contact with your culture if you learn English?	1	2	3	4
l) Do you think the best way to learn English is to take a course?	1	2	3	4

m) Are you happy you came to America? 1 2 3 4

2. Please circle your answer to these questions.

	<u>Many times</u>	<u>A few times</u>	<u>One time</u>	<u>Never</u>
a) Have you ever had a good experience at work because you are an immigrant who does not speak English very well?	1	2	3	4
b) Have you ever had a bad experience at work because you are an immigrant who does not speak English very well?	1	2	3	4
c) Have you ever had a good experience in the community because you are an immigrant who does not speak English very well?	1	2	3	4
d) Have you ever had a bad experience in the community because you are an immigrant who does not speak English very well?	1	2	3	4

3. Do you think people will behave differently to you when you become a better speaker of English?

Why?

4. a) Do you want your children to learn the following languages at school?

English	YES!	yes	no	NO!
Your first language	YES!	yes	no	NO!

Any other language? (Please state which) _____

b) Please explain why you want your children to learn those languages.

5. Is the American way of life different from the way of life in your home country? Please explain.

6. Does the American way of life make it easy or hard for you to learn English? Please explain.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP!

CUESTIONARIO (Español)

Por favor complete este cuestionario de la manera más cuidadosa que usted pueda. Si necesita más espacio para sus respuestas, por favor escriba de la parte posterior de la hoja. No hay respuestas correctas o incorrectas. Usted tiene la libertad de decir tanto cosas buenas como malas. Nadie verá sus respuestas excepto la investigadora (Anna Wharton.) Si usted no comprende alguna parte del cuestionario, puede preguntarle a la investigadora. Sus respuestas pueden ser escritas en inglés o en español. ¡Gracias!

A. INFORMACIÓN BIOGRÁFICA

1. a) Nombre: _____

b) Hombre ☐ o Mujer ☐ (por favor marque con una x)

2. Número telefónico: _____

3. Fecha de nacimiento: _____

4. Lugar de nacimiento: _____

5. a) ¿Está casada? Sí ☐ o No ☐

b) ¿Tiene hijos? Sí ☐ o No ☐

c) Por favor escriba la edad y sexo de sus hijos _____

6. Por favor escriba el nivel más alto de educación que usted ha recibido:

Escuela Primaria (Elemental) ☐

Escuela Secundaria ☐

Colegio Comunitario/Técnico/Escuela de Negocios ☐

Título Universitario (por ejemplo: B.A., B.Sc.) ☐

Título profesional o de posgrado (por ejemplo: Maestría, Licencia de Contador) ☐

Otro _____ ☐

B. INFORMACIÓN SOBRE SU IDIOMA

1. ¿Cuál es su primera lengua (su idioma nativo)? _____

2. a) ¿Sabía inglés antes de venir a los Estados Unidos? Sí ☐ o No ☐

b) Si contestó que sí, ¿cuánto inglés ya sabía, y cómo lo aprendió?

3. a) Además de su idioma natal e inglés, ¿sabe usted otro idioma? Sí [] o No []

b) Si contestó que sí, *cuáles* idiomas son, y *cuándo* y *dónde* los aprendió?

C. INFORMACIÓN MIGRATORIA

1. ¿*Cuándo* vino usted a los Estados Unidos? (mes y año): _____

2. ¿*Por qué* vino a los Estados Unidos?

3. a) ¿Tenía usted amigos en los Estados Unidos antes de su llegada? Sí [] o No []

b) ¿Tenía usted familia en los Estados Unidos antes de su llegada? Sí [] o No []

4. a) Antes de llegar a los Estados Unidos, ¿vivió usted en otro país además de su país natal?
Sí [] o No []

b) Si contestó que *sí*, escriba donde y por cuánto tiempo: _____

D. INFORMACIÓN SOBRE VIVIENDA

1. ¿Vive usted sola, con amigos, o con familia? _____

2. ¿Dónde vivió cuando llegó a los Estados Unidos por primera vez? _____

3. a) ¿Ha cambiado de domicilio desde su llegada? Sí [] o No []

b) Si contestó que *sí*, ¿cuántas veces y por qué? _____

4. ¿Por cuánto tiempo ha vivido en su residencia actual? _____

E. EXPERIENCIA CON EL IDIOMA INGLÉS

1. En comparación con personas cuyo primer idioma es el inglés, ¿cómo considera que usted habla inglés? (Por favor circule su respuesta):

De manera similar

Un poco peor

Mucho peor

2. En comparación con personas inmigrantes que usted conoce y que están aprendiendo inglés, ¿cómo considera que usted habla inglés? (Por favor circule su respuesta):

Mucho mejor

Mejor

De manera
similar

Un poco peor

Mucho peor

F. EXPERIENCIA LABORAL

1. ¿Qué tipo de trabajo hacía usted cuando estaba en su país natal?

2. ¿Qué experiencia laboral ha tenido desde que llegó a los Estados Unidos? Por favor complete la siguiente tabla.

	FECHA (mes/año)	LUGAR DE TRABAJO	TIPO DE TRABAJO	TIEMPO COMPLETO O MEDIO TIEMPO
a)				
b)				
c)				

3. a) ¿Está actualmente trabajando? Sí [] o No []

b) ¿Está contenta con su trabajo actual? Sí [] o No []

c) Si *no*, ¿qué trabajo le gustaría tener? ¿Qué necesita para obtener ese tipo de trabajo?

4. ¿Su trabajo actual le ayuda a aprender inglés? Por favor explique su respuesta.

G. LA CLASE DE INGLÉS

1. ¿Cómo se enteró usted sobre esta clase de inglés? _____

2. En general, ¿cuánto inglés ha aprendido usted en esta clase de inglés? (Por favor circule su respuesta):

Mucho Algo Poco Nada

3. ¿Hay algo en particular que usted haya aprendido en este curso, que le haya sido de gran utilidad?

4. En general, ¿cuánto inglés ha aprendido usted en las siguientes áreas? (Por favor circule sus respuestas.)

	Mucho	Algo	Poco	Nada
Entendiendo inglés cuando lo escucho	1	2	3	4
Hablando inglés	1	2	3	4
Leyendo inglés	1	2	3	4
Escribiendo en inglés	1	2	3	4

5. ¿Cómo cree usted que esta clase de inglés pueda ser **cambiada** para ayudar a que los estudiantes aprendan inglés mejor?

6. ¿Qué es lo que todavía *no* ha aprendido y le gustaría aprender?

H. CONTACTOS EN EL LANGUAGE

Por favor circule sus respuestas a las siguientes preguntas:

Todos	La mayoría	Algunos	Pocos	Ninguno
--------------	-----------------------	----------------	--------------	----------------

1. ¿Cuántas personas en su barrio/colonia hablan inglés como su primer idioma?	1	2	3	4	5
2. ¿Cuántas personas en su trabajo hablan inglés como su primer idioma?	1	2	3	4	5
3. ¿Cuántos de sus amigos hablan inglés como su primer idioma?	1	2	3	4	5
4. ¿Cuántos de sus amigos hablan el mismo idioma que usted como su primer idioma?	1	2	3	4	5

I. NIVEL DE USO DEL INGLÉS

En esta sección, me gustaría saber qué tan seguido usa inglés. Por favor circule sus respuestas:

	Todos los días	Dos/tres veces por semana	Una vez por semana	Una o dos veces al mes	Nunca
1. ¿Qué tan seguido habla inglés en casa?	1	2	3	4	5
2. ¿Qué tan seguido habla inglés fuera de casa?	1	2	3	4	5
3. ¿Qué tan seguido habla inglés con...					
a) su esposo	1	2	3	4	5
b) sus hijos/nietos	1	2	3	4	5
c) sus parientes	1	2	3	4	5
d) sus amigos	1	2	3	4	5
e) sus vecinos	1	2	3	4	5

	Todos los días	Dos/tres veces por semana	Una vez por semana	Una o dos veces al mes	Nunca
f) sus jefes/patrones/ supervisores	1	2	3	4	5
4. ¿Qué tan seguido habla inglés con...					
g) sus clientes	1	2	3	4	5
h) sus compañeros de trabajo	1	2	3	4	5
i) los maestros de la escuela	1	2	3	4	5
j) doctores/dentistas/ enfermeras	1	2	3	4	5
k) empleados de tiendas/ bancos	1	2	3	4	5
l) oficiales de gobierno	1	2	3	4	5
5. ¿Qué tan seguido lee anuncios y folletos en inglés?	1	2	3	4	5
6. ¿Qué tan seguido lee periódicos y libros en inglés?	1	2	3	4	5
7. ¿Qué tan seguido usted ve televisión o películas en inglés?	1	2	3	4	5
8. ¿Qué tan seguido usted escucha programas de radio en inglés?	1	2	3	4	5

	Todos los días	Dos/tres veces por semana	Una vez por semana	Una o dos veces al mes	Nunca
9. ¿Qué tan seguido usted escribe en inglés?	1	2	3	4	5

10. ¿Qué tipo de programas de radio escucha usted en inglés? _____

11. ¿Qué tipo de cosas escribe usted en inglés? _____

J. AUTOEVALUACIÓN DE SU PROGRESO EN INGLÉS

1. En general, ¿qué tan **fácil** o **difícil** es para usted usar **inglés** para hacer las siguientes cosas?

	Muy fácil	Fácil	Difícil	Muy difícil
a) Hablar con mi esposo	1	2	3	4
b) Hablar con mis hijos/nietos	1	2	3	4
c) Hablar con otros parientes	1	2	3	4
d) Hablar con amigos	1	2	3	4
e) Hablar con vecinos	1	2	3	4
f) Hablar con empleados/supervisores	1	2	3	4
g) Hablar con clientes	1	2	3	4
h) Hablar con compañeros de trabajo	1	2	3	4
i) Hablar con maestros/doctores/dentistas	1	2	3	4
j) Hablar con vendedores de tiendas	1	2	3	4
k) Hablar con oficiales de gobierno	1	2	3	4
l) Hablar con gente que no conoce	1	2	3	4
m) Leer el periódico	1	2	3	4

	Muy fácil	Fácil	Difícil	Muy difícil
n) Mirar televisión/películas	1	2	3	4
ñ) Escuchar el radio	1	2	3	4
o) Llenar formularios y cuestionarios	1	2	3	4
p) Escribir cartas	1	2	3	4

2. En general, ¿cuándo se siente **cómoda** usando inglés, y cuándo se siente **incómoda** usando inglés? Por favor explique.

K. EL PROCESO DE APRENDIZAJE

1. ¿Qué cree usted que le ha ayudado más para aprender inglés?

2. Si su inglés ha mejorado, ¿qué cosas puede hacer **hoy** que no podía hacer hace un año?

3. Cuando usted sea una muy buena hablante de inglés, ¿qué cosas podrá hacer **en el futuro** que no es capaz de hacer el día de hoy?

L. LANGUAGE Y CULTURA

1. Por favor seleccione una de las siguientes respuestas, respondiendo “¡SÍ!” si usted está extremadamente de acuerdo, “sí” si está de acuerdo, “no” si no está de acuerdo, y “¡NO!” si está extremadamente en desacuerdo.

	¡SÍ!	sí	no	¡NO!
a) ¿Le gustaría tener más oportunidades de hablar en inglés?	1	2	3	4
b) ¿Le gustaría tener más oportunidades de escribir en inglés?	1	2	3	4
c) ¿Los hombres tienen más oportunidades de hablar en inglés que las mujeres?	1	2	3	4
d) ¿Los niños tienen más oportunidades de hablar en inglés que los adultos?	1	2	3	4
e) ¿Le gustaría tener más amigos que hablan inglés?	1	2	3	4
f) ¿Los americanos le ayudan cuando usted intenta hablar en inglés?	1	2	3	4

	¡SÍ!	sí	no	¡NO!
g) ¿Se necesita hablar inglés para tener éxito en los Estados Unidos?	1	2	3	4
h) ¿Tendría usted un mejor trabajo si su inglés fuera mejor?	1	2	3	4
i) ¿Sus hijos hablan mejor inglés que usted?	1	2	3	4
j) ¿Perdería contacto con sus hijos si no aprendiera a hablar inglés?	1	2	3	4
k) ¿Perdería contacto con su cultura si aprende inglés?	1	2	3	4
l) ¿Cree usted que la mejor manera de aprender inglés es tomando un curso?	1	2	3	4
m) ¿Está usted alegre de que vino a los Estados Unidos?	1	2	3	4

2. Por favor circule su respuesta a las siguientes preguntas.

	Muchas veces	Algunas veces	Una vez	Nunca
a) ¿Alguna vez ha tenido una buena experiencia en su trabajo, debido a ser una inmigrante que no habla inglés muy bien?	1	2	3	4
b) ¿Alguna vez ha tenido una mala experiencia en su trabajo, debido a ser una inmigrante que no habla inglés muy bien?	1	2	3	4
c) ¿Alguna vez ha tenido una buena experiencia en la comunidad, debido a ser una inmigrante que no habla inglés muy bien?	1	2	3	4
d) ¿Alguna vez ha tenido una mala experiencia en la comunidad, debido a ser una inmigrante que no habla inglés muy bien?	1	2	3	4

3. ¿Cree usted que la gente se comportará de manera diferente hacia usted cuando usted pueda hablar en inglés de mejor manera?

4. a) ¿Desea usted que sus hijos aprendan los siguientes idiomas en la escuela?

Inglés	¡Sí!	sí	no	¡NO!
Su primer idioma	¡Sí!	sí	no	¡NO!

¿Algún otro idioma? (Por favor indique cuál idioma) _____

b) Por favor explique por qué desea que sus hijos aprendan esos idiomas.

5. ¿Es el estilo de vida americano diferente del estilo de vida en su país natal? Por favor explique su respuesta.

6. ¿El estilo de vida americano hace que aprender inglés sea más fácil o más difícil para usted?
Por favor explique su respuesta.

¡MUCHAS GRACIAS POR SU COLABORACIÓN!

APPENDIX B

Entrevista de Grupo

Hola a todas. Muchas gracias por venir y ser parte de este estudio. Realmente apreciamos sus respuestas y su tiempo. Sabemos que usted está invirtiendo un par de horas de su tiempo para estar aquí, por eso estamos muy agradecidos. Sabemos también que algunas de las preguntas de hoy ya han sido hechas en el cuestionario y es muy posible que parezca repetitivo, pero esto es necesario porque el responder en persona muchas veces permite contestar de manera más compresiva y completa. Recuerde que esta sesión será grabada en audio de manera que los investigadores puedan recordar lo que se haya hablado, pero sus respuestas se mantendrán seguras y secretas. Si se llegase a poner por escrito nuestra conversación, no se usarán los nombres reales de los referidos.

Finalmente, me gustaría que esta sea una conversación entre todo el grupo, donde las preguntas sean contestadas entre ustedes, y no sólo conmigo. Y podemos hablar en ingles y español.

PRENDER LA GRABADORA/TURN ON RECORDER

1. ¿Cree que aprender inglés es importante? ¿Por qué?
Do you think learning English (education) is important? Why?
2. ¿Cuáles son las ventajas de hablar inglés?
What are the advantages of speaking English?
3. ¿Por qué necesita aprender inglés?
Why do you need to learn English?
4. ¿Cuál es su meta para aprender inglés hoy?
What is your goal for learning English today?
5. ¿Cuál es su meta a largo plazo para aprender inglés?
What is your long term goal for learning English?
6. ¿Por quién está aprendiendo inglés? ¿Por usted misma? ¿Por su esposo? ¿Por alguien más?
Who are you studying English for? Yourself? Husband? Someone else?
7. ¿Qué significa para usted ser una mujer aprendiendo inglés en los Estados Unidos?
What does it mean to be a woman learning English in the United States?

8. En general, ¿cómo ha sido el proceso de aprender inglés?
What has the process of learning English been like overall?
9. ¿Qué cambios personales (físicos, emocionales, sociales, intelectuales, psicológicos) ha experimentado mientras ha aprendido inglés?
What personal changes have you seen while learning English?
10. ¿Cómo se siente sobre estos cambios?
How do you feel about these changes?
11. ¿Cómo se siente sobre su nivel de inglés ahora?
How do you feel about your level of English now?
12. ¿Qué puede hacer ahora que no podía hacer cuando empezó a aprender inglés?
What can you do now that you couldn't do when you started learning English?
13. Si una mujer de la clase de inglés del nivel de principiantes quisiera dejar de tomar las clases de inglés, ¿qué le diría usted?
If one of the women in the beginner's English class wanted to quit English class, what would you say to her?

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ESL Advanced Class
Day/date: _____
